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J. Hutton.

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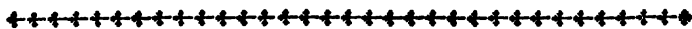


A N
E S S A Y
O N T H E
G E N I U S
A N D
W R I T I N G S
O F
P O P E.

J. Warton

The SECOND EDITION, Corrected.

Satyra quidem tota nostra est: in qua primus insignem laudem adeptus est Lucilius; qui quosdam ita deditos sibi adhuc habet amatores, ut eum, non ejusdem modo operis autoribus, sed omnibus poetis, præferre non dubitent. QUINTILIAN.



L O N D O N,

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MDCCLXII.



ROY WEN
CLUB
PAROL

T O
THE REVEREND
D^R. Y O U N G,
R E C T O R
Of WELWYN in HERTFORDSHIRE.

DEAR SIR,

PERMIT me to break into your retirement, the residence of virtue and literature, and to trouble you with a few reflections on the merits and real character of an admired author, and on other collateral subjects of criticism, that will naturally arise in the course of such an enquiry. No love of singularity, no affectation of paradoxical opinions, gave rise to the following work.

iv DEDICATION.

I revere the memory of POPE, I respect and honour his abilities ; but I do not think him at the head of his profession. In other words, in that species of poetry wherein POPE excelled, he is superior to all mankind : and I only say, that this species of poetry is not the most excellent one of the art.

WE do not, it should seem sufficiently attend to the difference there is, betwixt a MAN OF WIT, a MAN OF SENSE, and a TRUE POET. Donne and Swift, were undoubtedly men of wit, and men of sense : but what traces have they left of PURE POETRY ? It is remarkable, that Dryden says of Donne ; He was the greatest wit, tho' not the greatest poet of this nation. Fontenelle and La Motte are entitled to the former character ; but what can they urge to gain
the

DEDICATION. v

the latter? Which of these characters is the most valuable and useful, is entirely out of the question: all I plead for, is, to have their several provinces kept distinct from each other; and to impress on the reader, that a clear head, and acute understanding are not sufficient, alone, to make a POET; that the most solid observations on human life, expressed with the utmost elegance and brevity, are MORALITY, and not POETRY; that the EPISTLES of Boileau in RHYME, are no more poetical, than the CHARACTERS of La Bruyere in PROSE; and that it is a creative and glowing IMAGINATION, “acer spiritus ac vis,” and that alone, that can stamp a writer with this exalted and very uncommon character, which so few possess, and of which so few can properly judge.

FOR

vi DEDICATION.

FOR one person who can adequately relish, and enjoy, a work of imagination, twenty are to be found who can taste and judge of, observations on familiar life, and the manners of the age. The satires of Ariosto, are more read than the Orlando Furioso, or even Dante. Are there so many cordial admirers of Spenser and Milton, as of Hudibras?—If we strike out of the number of these supposed admirers, those who appear such out of fashion, and not of feeling, Swift's rhapsody on poetry is far more popular, than Akenfide's noble ode to Lord Huntingdon. The EPISTLES on the Characters of men and women, and your sprightly satires, my good friend, are more frequently perused, and quoted, than L'Allegro and Il Penseroso of Milton. Had you written only these satires,
you

DEDICATION. vii

you would indeed have gained the title of a man of wit, and a man of sense; but, I am confident, would not insist on being denominated a POET, MERELY on their account.

NON SATIS EST PURIS VERSUM PERSCRIBERE VERBIS.

IT is amazing this matter should ever have been mistaken, when Horace has taken particular and repeated pains, to settle and adjust the opinion in question. He has more than once disclaimed all right and title to the name of POET, on the score of his ethic and satiric pieces.

—NEQUE ENIM CONCLUDERE VERSUM
DIXERIS ESSE SATIS—

are lines, often repeated, but whose meaning is not extended and weighed as it ought to be. Nothing can be more judicious than the method he prescribes,
of

viii DEDICATION.

of trying whether any composition be essentially poetical or not ; which is, to drop entirely the measures and numbers, and transpose and invert the order of the words : and in this unadorned manner to peruse the passage. If there be really in it a true poetical spirit, all your inversions and transpositions will not disguise and extinguish it ; but it will retain its lustre, like a diamond, unset, and thrown back into the rubbish of the mine. Let us make a little experiment on the following well-known lines ; “ *Yes, you*
“ *despise the man that is confined to books,*
“ *who rails at human kind from his study ;*
“ *tho’ what he learns, he speaks ; and*
“ *may perhaps advance some general*
“ *maxims, or may be right by chance.*
“ *The coxcomb bird, so grave and so talk-*
“ *ative, that cries whore, knave, and*
“ *cuckold,*

DEDICATION. ix

*“cuckold, from his cage, tho’ he rightly
 “call many a passenger, you hold him no
 “philosopher. And yet, such is the fate
 “of all extremes, men may be read too
 “much, as well as books. We grow more
 “partial, for the sake of the observer, to
 “observations which we ourselves make;
 “less so to written wisdom, because an-
 “nother’s. Maxims are drawn from
 “notions, and those from guesses.”* What
 shall we say of this passage?—Why,
 that it is most excellent sense, but
 just as poetical as the “*Qui fit*
 “*Mæcenas*” of the author who recom-
 mends this method of trial. Take ten
 lines of the *Iliad*, *Paradise Lost*, or even
 of the *Georgics* of Virgil, and see whe-
 ther by any process of critical chymistry,
 you can lower and reduce them to the
 sameness of prose. You will find that
 b they

they will appear like Ulysses in his disguise of rags, still a hero, tho' lodged in the cottage of the herdsman Eumæus.

/ THE Sublime and the Pathetic are the two chief nerves of all genuine poesy. What is there transcendently Sublime or Pathetic in POPE? In his works there is indeed, "nihil inane, nihil arcessitum;--" "puro tamen fonti quam magno flumini "proprior;" as the excellent Quintilian remarks of Lyfias. And because I am perhaps unwilling to speak out in plain English, I will adopt the following passage of Voltaire, which, in my opinion, as exactly characterizes POPE, as it does his model Boileau, for whom it was originally designed. "INCAPABLE PEUT-ETRE DU SUBLIME QUI ELEVE L'AME, ET DU SENTIMENT QUI L'ATTENDRIT, MAIS FAIT POUR ECLAIRER CEUX A QUI LA NATURE ACCORDA L'UN ET L'AUTRE, LABORIEUX, SEVERE, PRECIS,

PUR,

DEDICATION. xi

PUR, HARMONIEUX, IL DEVINT, ENFIN, LE POETE
DE LA RAISON."

OUR English poets may, I think, be disposed in four different classes and degrees. In the first class, I would place, our only three sublime and pathetic poets; SPENSER, SHAKESPEARE, MILTON. In the second class should be ranked, such as possessed the true poetical genius, in a more moderate degree, but had noble talents for moral, ethical, and panegyrical poetry. At the head of these are DRYDEN, PRIOR, ADDISON, COWLEY, WALLER, GARTH, FENTON, GAY, DENHAM, PARNELL. In the third class may be placed, men of wit, of elegant taste, and lively fancy in describing familiar life, tho' not the higher scenes of poetry. Here may be numbered, BUTLER, SWIFT, ROCHESTER, DONNE, DORSET, OLDHAM.

In

xii DEDICATION.

In the fourth class, the mere versifiers, however smooth and mellifluous some of them may be thought, should be disposed. Such as PITT, SANDYS, FAIRFAX, BROOME, BUCKINGHAM, LANS-
DOWN. This enumeration is not intended as a complete catalogue, but only to mark out briefly the different species of our celebrated writers. In which of these classes POPE deserves to be placed, the following work is intended to determine.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Your affectionate

And faithful servant,

Advertisement.

WHENEVER a quotation is made in the French language, throughout the following remarks, the author desires to be understood, that he is far from thinking the use of that language any particular decoration to his style ; he only uses French words, when the force and meaning of the passages so quoted depend on the peculiar turn and idiom of the original.



A N
E S S A Y
O N T H E
G E N I U S and W R I T I N G S
O F
P O P E.

S E C T. I.

*Of the PASTORALS, and the MESSIAH
an Eclogue.*

PRINCES and Authors are seldom spoken of, during their lives, with justice and impartiality. Admiration and envy, their constant attendants, like two unskilful artists, are apt to overcharge their pieces with too great a quantity of light or of shade; and are disqualified happily to hit upon that middle colour, that mixture of

B

error

2 ESSAY ON THE GENIUS

error and excellence, which alone renders every representation of man just and natural. This perhaps may be one reason, among others, why we have never yet seen a fair and candid criticism on the character and merits of our last great poet, Mr. POPE. I have therefore thought, that it would be no unpleasing amusement, or uninformative employment to examine at large, without blind panegyric, or petulant invective, the writings of this English Classic, in the order in which they are arranged in the elegant edition of Dr. Warburton. As I shall neither censure nor commend, without alleging the reason on which my opinion is founded, I shall be entirely unmoved at the imputation of malignity, or the clamours of popular prejudice.

It is somewhat strange, that in the pastorals of a young poet there should not be found a single rural image that is new: but this, I am afraid, is the case in the PASTORALS before us. The ideas of Theocritus, Virgil,

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 3

gil, and Spenfer, are indeed here exhibited in language equally mellifluous and pure; but the descriptions and sentiments are trite and common.

THAT the design of pastoral poesy is, to represent the undisturbed felicity of the golden age, is an empty notion, which, though supported by a Rapin and a Fontenelle, I think, all rational critics have agreed to extirpate and explode. But I do not remember, that even these, or any critics have remarked the circumstance that gave origin to the opinion, that any golden age was intended. Theocritus, the father and the model of this enchanting species of composition, lived and wrote in Sicily. The climate of Sicily was delicious, and the face of the country various, and beautiful: it's vallies and it's precipices, it's grottos and cascades were SWEETLY INTERCHANGED, and it's flowers and fruits were lavish and luscious. The poet described what he saw and felt: and had no need to have recourse to those artificial

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assemblages of pleasing objects, which are not to be found in nature. The figs and the honey, which he assigns * as a reward to a victorious shepherd, were in themselves exquisite, and are therefore assigned with great propriety : and the beauties of that luxurious landscape so richly and circumstantially delineated in the close of the seventh idyllium, where all things smelt of summer and smelt of autumn,

Παῖς ὡςδεῖν θύει μάλ' αἰσίων, ὡςδε δ' ὀπωρεῖ †,

were present and real. Succeeding writers supposing these beauties too great and abundant to be real, referred them to the fictitious and imaginary scenes of a golden age.

A MIXTURE of British and Grecian ideas may justly be deemed a blemish in the PASTORALS of POPE : and propriety is certainly violated, when he couples Pactolus with Thames, and Windsor with Hybla. Complaints of IMMODERATE heat, and wishes to be conveyed to cooling caverns, when uttered

* Idyll. i. ver. 146.

† Ver. 133.

by

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 5

by the inhabitants of Greece, have a decorum and consistency, which they totally lose in the character of a British shepherd: and Theocritus, during the ardors of Sirius, must have heard the murmurings of a brook, and the whispers of a pine *, with more home-felt pleasure, than POPE † could possibly experience upon the same occasion. We can never completely relish, or adequately understand any author, especially any Ancient, except we constantly keep in our eye his climate, his country, and his age. POPE himself informs us, in a note, that he judiciously omitted the following verse,

And list'ning wolves grow milder as they hear ‡

on account of the absurdity, which Spenser overlooked, of introducing wolves into England. But on this principle, which is certainly a just one, may it not be asked, why he should speak, the scene lying in Windfor-

* Idyll. i. ver. 1.

† Past. iv. ver. 1.

‡ Past. ii.

Forest,

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Forest, of the SULTRY SIRIUS *, of the GRATEFUL CLUSTERS of grapes †, of a pipe of reeds ‡, the antique fistula, of *thanking Ceres for a plentiful harvest* §, of the *sacrifice of lambs* ||, with many other instances that might be adduced to this purpose. That POPE however was sensible of the importance of adapting images to the scene of action, is obvious from the following example of his judgment; for in translating,

Audiit EUROTAS, jussitque ediscere LAUROS

he has dextrously dropt the *laurels* appropriated to Eurotas, as he is speaking of the river Thames, and has rendered it,

Thames heard the numbers, as he flow'd along,
And bade his *willows* learn the moving song §§.

IN the passages which POPE has imitated from Theocritus, and from his Latin translator Virgil, he has merited but little applause. It may not be unentertaining to see

* Paft. ii. ver. 21. † Paft. iii. ver. 24. ‡ Paft. ii. ver. 41.
§ Ibid. ver. 65. || Paft. iv. ver. 81. §§ Ibid. ver. 14.

how

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 7

how coldly and unpoetically POPE has copied the subsequent appeal to the nymphs on the death of Daphnis, in comparison of Milton on LYCIDAS, one of his juvenile pieces.

Πα ποκ' ἄρ' ἦσθ' ὅκα Δαφνίς ἑταίρῳ; πα ποκα, Νυμφαί;
 Ἡ καὶ Πηνειῷ καλὰ τιμπία, ἡ καὶ Πινδῷ;
 Οὐ γὰρ δὴ πύλαμοιο μέλαν ῥοοὺν ἑγχίλ' Ἀναπῶ,
 Οὐδ' Αἰνῆας σκοπίαν, ἕδ' Ἀκκιδῶ ἱερὸν ἕδωρ *.

Where stray ye, Muses, in what lawn or grove,
 While your Alexis pines in hopeless love?
 In those fair fields where sacred Isis glides,
 Or else where Cam his winding vales divides †.

Where were ye, nymphs, when the remorseless deep
 Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
 For neither were ye playing on the steep
 Where your old bards, the famous Druids lie;
 Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
 Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream ‡.

THE mention of places remarkably romantic, the supposed habitation of Druids, bards, and wizards, is far more pleasing to the imagination, than the obvious introduction of Cam and Isis, as seats of the Muses.

* THEOCRITUS, Idyll. i. 66. † POPE, Past. ii. 24. ‡ MILTON.

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A SHEPHERD in Theocritus wishes with much tenderness and elegance, both which must suffer in a literal translation, “ Would I “ could become a murmuring bee, fly into your “ grotto, and be permitted to creep among the “ leaves of ivy and fern that compose the “ chaplet which adorns your head *.” POPE has thus altered this image,

Oh! were I made by some transforming pow’r,
The captive bird that sings within thy bow’r !
Then might my voice thy list’ning ears employ ;
And I, those kisses he receives, enjoy †.

On three accounts the former image is preferable to the latter: for the pastoral wildness, the delicacy, and the uncommonness of the thought. I cannot forbear adding, that the riddle of the *Royal Oak*, in the first Pastoral, invented in imitation of the Virgilian ænigmas in the third eclogue, favours of pun, and puerile conceit.

* ——— Αἰθε γίνοιμαν
Α βομβέουσα μέλισσα, κί ’ς τιόν ’αἶθρον ἵκωμαι,
Τόν κίσσον διαδυ, καί ταν σίλιν ἄ τν σπινασθῇ. Idyll. iii. 12.

† Past. ii. 45.

Say, Daphnis, say in what glad foil appears
A wondrous tree, that sacred monarchs bears?

With what propriety could the tree, whose shade protected the king, be said to be prolific of princes?

THAT POPE has not equalled Theocritus, will indeed appear less surprising, if we reflect, that no original writer ever remained so unrivalled by succeeding copyists, as this Sicilian master.

IF it should be objected, that the barrenness of invention imputed to POPE from a view of his PASTORALS, is equally imputable to the Bucolics of Virgil, it may be answered, that whatever may be determined of the rest, yet the first and last Eclogues of Virgil are indisputable proofs of true genius, and power of fancy. The influence of war on the tranquillity of rural life, rendered the subject of the first new, and interesting: its composition is truly dramatic; and the characters

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of its two shepherds are well supported, and happily contrasted: and the last has expressively painted the changeful resolutions, the wild wishes, the passionate and abrupt exclamations, of a disappointed and despairing lover.

UPON the whole, the principal merit of the PASTORALS of POPE consists, in their correct and musical versification; musical, to a degree of which rhyme could hardly be thought capable: and in giving the first specimen of that harmony in English verse, which is now become indispensably necessary; and which has so forcibly and universally influenced the public ear, as to have rendered every moderate rhymers melodious. POPE lengthened the abruptness of Waller, and at the same time contracted the exuberance of Dryden.

I REMEMBER to have been informed, by an intimate friend of POPE, that he had once laid a design of writing AMERICAN ECLOGUES:

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 11

ECLOGUES: The subject would have been fruitful of the most poetical imagery; and, if properly executed, would have rescued the author from the accusation here urged, of having written Eclogues without invention.

OUR author, who had received an early tincture of religion, a reverence for which he preserved to the last, was with justice convinced, that the scriptures of God contained not only the purest precepts of morality, but the most elevated and sublime strokes of genuine poetry; strokes, as much superior to any thing Heathenism can produce, as is Jehovah to Jupiter. This is the case more particularly in the exalted prophecy of Isaiah, which POPE has so successfully versified in an Eclogue, that incontestably surpasses the Pollio of Virgil: although perhaps the dignity, the energy, and the simplicity of the original are in a few passages weakened and diminished by florid epithets, and useless circumlocutions.

See nature haſtes her earlieſt wreaths to bring,
With all the incenſe of the breathing ſpring *. —

are lines, which have too much prettineſs, and too modern an air. The judicious addition of circumſtances and adjuncts is what renders poeſy a more lively imitation of nature than proſe. POPE has been happy in introducing the following circumſtance: the prophet ſays, “ The parched ground ſhall “ become a pool;” Our author expreſſes this idea by ſaying, that the ſhepherd,

— ſhall START amid the thirſty wild to hear
New falls of water murmuring in his ear †.

A ſtriking example of a ſimilar beauty may be added from Thompson. Meliſander, in the Tragedy of AGAMEMNON, after telling us he was conveyed in a veſſel, at mid-night, to the wildeſt of the Cyclades, adds, when the pitileſs mariners had left him in that dreadful ſolitude,

— — — — — I never heard
A ſound ſo diſmal as their parting oars!

* MESS. v. 23.

† v. 70.

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 13

ON the other hand, the prophet has been sometimes particular, when POPE has been only general. “ Lift up thine eyes round
 “ about, and see; all they gather themselves
 “ together, they come to thee: — The
 “ multitude of CAMELS shall cover thee:
 “ the DROMEDARIES of Median and Ephah:
 “ all they from Sheba shall come: they
 “ shall bring gold and incense, and they
 “ shall shew forth the praises of the Lord.
 “ All the FLOCKS of Kedar shall be ga-
 “ thered together unto thee; the RAMS of
 “ Nebaioth shall minister unto thee*.”

In imitating this passage, POPE has omitted the different beasts that in so picturesque a manner characterize the different countries which were to be gathered together on this important event, and says only in undistinguishing terms,

See, barbarous nations at thy gates attend,
 Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend;
 See thy bright altars throng'd with prostrate kings,
 And heap'd with products of Sabæan springs†.

* Ifaiah, c. lx. v. 4, 6, 7, † Ver. 91.

As prosperity and happiness are described in this Eclogue by a combination of the most pleasing and agreeable objects, so misery and destruction are as forcibly delineated in the same Isaiah, by the circumstances of distress and desolation, that were to attend the fall of that magnificent city, Babylon: and the latter is perhaps a more proper and interesting subject for poetry than the former; as such kinds of objects make the deepest impression on the mind: terror being a stronger sensation than joy. Accordingly, a noble ode on the destruction of Babylon, taken from the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, has been written by Dr. Lowth; whose latin prelections on the inimitable poetry of the Hebrews, abounding in remarks entirely new, delivered in the purest and most expressive language, are the richest augmentation literature has lately received; and from which the following passage, gradually unfolding the singular beauties of this prophecy, is here closely, though faintly, translated, and inserted as a pattern of just criticism.

THE

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 15

“ THE prophet having predicted the deliverance of the Jews, and their return into their own country from their rigorous Babylonish captivity, instantly introduces them singing a triumphal song on the fall of the king of Babylon; a song abounding in the most splendid images, and carried on by perpetual, and those very beautiful, personifications. The song begins with a sudden exclamation of the Jews, expressing their joy and wonder at the unexpected change of their condition, and death of the tyrant. Earth with her inhabitants triumphs; the firs and cedars of Libanus, under which images the allegoric style frequently shadows the kings and princes of the Gentiles, rejoice, and insult with reproaches the broken power of their most implacable foe.

She is at rest, the whole earth is quiet: they break
forth into singing.

Even the firs rejoice at thee, the cedars of Libanus:
Since thou art laid low, no feller is come up against us.

There follows a most daring prosopopeia
of ORCUS, or the infernal regions: he rouses
his

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his inhabitants, the manes of princes, and the shades of departed kings: immediately all of them arise from their thrones, and walk forward to meet the king of Babylon; they insult and deride him, and gather consolation from his calamity.

Art thou also made weak as we? art thou made like unto us?

Is thy pride dashed down to Orcus, the noise of thy harps?

The worm is strewn under thee, the earth-worm is thy covering!

The Jews are again represented speaking: they most strongly exaggerate his remarkable fall, by an exclamation formed in the manner of funeral lamentations:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!

Thou art dashed down to the earth, thou that didst crush the nations!

They next represent the king himself speaking, and madly boasting of his unbounded power, whence the prodigiousness of his ruin is wonderfully aggravated. Nor is this
enough;

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 17

enough; a new character is immediately formed: Those are introduced who found the body of the king of Babylon cast out: they survey it closely and attentively, and at last hardly know it.

Is this the man who made earth tremble, who shook
the kingdoms?

Who made the world a solitude, and destroyed it's
cities?

They reproach him with the loss of the common rite of sepulture, which was deservedly denied to him for his cruelty and oppression, and curse his name, his race, and posterity. The scene is closed by a most awful speech of God himself, menacing a perpetual extirpation to the king of Babylon, to his descendants, and to his city; and confirming the immutability of his councils by the ratification of a solemn oath.

WHAT images, how various, how thick-
fown, how sublime, exalted with what ener-
gy, what expressions, figures, and sentiments,

D

are

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are here accumulated together! We hear the Jews, the cedars of Libanus, the shades of the departed kings, the kings of Babylon, those who find his body, and lastly Jehovah himself, all speaking in order; and behold them acting their several parts, as it were in a drama. One continued action is carried on; or rather a various and manifold series of different actions is connected;—an excellence, more peculiarly appropriated to the sublimer ode, and consummately displayed in this poem of Isaiah, which is the most perfect and unexampled model, among all the monuments of antiquity. The personifications are frequent, but not confused; are bold but not affected: a free, lofty, and truly divine spirit predominates through the whole. Nor is any thing wanting to crown and complete the sublimity of this ode with absolute beauty; nor can the Greek or Roman poetry produce any thing that is similar, or second, to this ode*.”.

* Przegl. xiii. pag. 121.

IT cannot be thought strange, that he who could so judiciously explain, could as poetically express, the ideas of Isaiah: the latter he has performed in many instances; but in none more strikingly than in the following, which magnificently represents the Messiah treading the wine-press in his anger, and which an impartial judge, not blinded by the charms of antiquity, will think equal to any description in Virgil, in point of elegance and energy:

—— Ille patris vires indutus et iram
 Dira rubens graditur, per stragem et fracta potentum
 Agmina, prona solo; prostratisque hostibus ultor
 Insultat; ceu præla novo spumantia musto
 Exercens, salit attritas calcator in uvas,
 Congestamque struem subigit: cæde atra recenti
 Crura madent, rorantque inspersæ sanguine vestes *.

* Prælect. vii. pag. 62.

S E C T. II.

*Of WINDSOR-FOREST, and
LYRIC Pieces.*

DESCRPTIVE Poetry was by no means the shining talent of POPE. This assertion may be manifested by the few images introduced in the poem before us, which are not equally applicable to any place whatsoever. Rural beauty in general, and not the peculiar beauties of the forest of Windsor, are here described. Nor are the sports of setting, shooting, and fishing, included between the ninety-third and one hundred and forty-sixth verses, to which the reader is referred, at all more appropriated. The stag-chase, that immediately follows, although some of the lines are incomparably good *, is not so full, so animated, and so circumstantiated, as that of Somerville.

THE digression that describes the demolition of the thirty villages by William the Conqueror, is well imagined; particularly,

* See particularly, ver. 151.

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 21

Round broken columns clasping ivy twin'd,
O'er heaps of ruin stalk'd the stately hind ;
The fox obscene to gaping tombs retires,
And savage howlings fill the sacred quires *.

Though I cannot forbear thinking, that the following picture of the ruins of Godstow-Nunnery, drawn, it should seem, on the spot, and worthy the hand of Paul Brill, is by no means excelled by the foregoing.

*Qua nudo Rosamonda humilis sub culmine tecti
Marginis obscuri servat inane decus,
Rara intermissæ circum vestigia molis,
Et sola in vacuo tramite porta labat :
Sacræ olim sedes riguæ convallis in umbra,
Et veteri pavidum religione nemus.
Pallentes nocturna ciens campana forores
Hinc matutinum sæpe monebat avem ;
Hinc procul in media tardæ caliginis hora
Prodidit arcanas arcata fenestra faces :
Nunc muscosa extant sparsum de cespite faxa,
Nunc muro avellunt germen agreste boves †.*

VOLTAIRE, that lively maintainer of many a paradox, is inclined to dispute the truth of

* Ver. 69. † Carmina Quadraget. Oxon. 1748. pag. 3.

the devastation imputed to William I. but for a reason very strange and inconclusive. “ Une telle action, says he, est trop insensée pour être vraisemblable. Les historiens ne font pas attention qu’il faut au moins vingt années pour qu’un nouveau plan d’arbres devienne une forêt propre à la chasse. On lui fait semer cette forêt en 1080, il avoit alors 63 ans. Quelle apparence y a-t-il, qu’un homme raisonnable ait à cet âge détruit des villages pour semer quinze lieues en bois, dans l’espérance d’y chasser un jour *?” There is indeed some probability that, the character of this prince has been misrepresented, and his oppressions magnified. The law of the curfew-bell, by which every inhabitant of England was obliged to extinguish his fire and candles at eight in the evening, has been usually alleged as the institution of a capricious tyrant. But this law, as Voltaire † rightly observes, was so far from being absurdly tyrannical, that it was an ancient custom established among all

* Abregé de l’Histoire Universelle, &c. tom. 1. pag. 280.

† Ibid.

the

the monasteries of the north. Their houses were built of wood, and so cautious a method to prevent fire, was an object worthy a prudent legislator. A more amiable idea than POPE has here exhibited of the Conqueror, is given us of the same prince, by that diligent enquirer into antiquity the President Henault, in a passage that contains some curious particulars, characteristical of the manners of that age. "This monarch protected letters, at a time, when books were so rare and uncommon, that a countess of Anjou gave for a collection of homilies, two hundred sheep, a measure of wheat, another of rye, a third of millet, and a certain number of the skins of martens *." But to return. The story of † Lodona is prettily Ovidian; but there is scarcely a single incident in it, but what is borrowed from some transformation of Ovid. The picture of a virtuous and learned man in

* *Novel Abregé Chronologique de l'Histoire de France.* tom. 1. pag. 126. To this useful and entertaining work Voltaire has often been deeply indebted, without confessing his obligation.

† *Ver*, 171.

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retirement * is highly finished, as the poet was here in his proper element, recommending integrity and science. He has no where discovered more poetic enthusiasm, than where, speaking of the poets who lived or died near this spot, he breaks out,

I seem through consecrated walks to rove,
I hear soft music die along the grove;
Led by the sound I roam from shade to shade,
By godlike poets venerable made †.

The enumeration of the princes who were either born or interred at Windsor is judiciously introduced. Yet I have frequently wondered, that he should have omitted the opportunity of describing at length it's venerable ancient castle, and the fruitful and extensive prospects ‡ which it commands. He slides with dexterity and address from speaking of the miseries of the civil war to the

* Ver. 233.

† Ver. 265.

‡ The great improvements lately made near Windsor-lodge, by the Duke of Cumberland, particularly the magnificent lake and cascade, highly deserve to be celebrated by some future POET; and would have contributed not a little to the beauty of the poem now before us.

blessings

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 25

bleffings of peace.* OLD FATHER THAMES
is raifed, and aëts, and fpeaks, with becom-
ing dignity. And though the trite and ob-
vious infignia of a river god are attributed,
yet there is one circumftance in his appear-
ance highly picturefque,

His fea-green mantle waving with the wind †.

The relievo upon his urn is alfo finely
imagined,

The figur'd freams in waves of filver roll'd,
And on their banks Augufta rofe in gold ‡.

He has with exquisite fkill felected only
thofe rivers as attendants of Thames, who
are his fubjects, his tributaries, or neigh-
bours. I cannot refift the pleafure of tran-
fcribing the paffage.

First the fam'd authors of his ancient name,
The winding Ifis, and the fruitful Tame :
The Kennet fswift, for filver eels renown'd,
The Loddon flow, with verdant ofiers crown'd :
Cole, whole dark freams his flowery iflands lave,
And chalky Wey, that rolls a milky wave :

* Ver. 324.

† Ver. 48.

‡ Ver. 333.

The blue transparent Vandalis appears ;
 The gulphy Lee his sedgy tresses rears ;
 The fullen Mole that hides his diving flood,
 And silent Darent stain'd with British blood *.

As I before produced a passage of Milton which I thought superior to a similar one of POPE, I shall, in order to preserve impartiality, produce another from Milton, in which I think him inferior to the last quoted passage, except perhaps in the third line; first remarking that both authors are much indebted to Spenser†, and perhaps to Drayton.

Rivers arise! whether thou be the son
 Of utmost Tweed, or Ouse, or gulphy Dun,
 Or Trent, who like some earth-born giant spreads
 His thirty arms along th' indented meads,
 Or fullen Mole, that runneth underneath,
 Or Severn swift, guilty of maiden's death,
 Or rocky Avon, or of sedgy Lee,
 Or coaly Tine, or ancient hallow'd Dee,
 Or Humber loud that keeps the Scythian's name,
 Or Medway smooth, or royal-towred Thame ‡.

* Ver. 337.

† Fairy Queen, B. iv. C. 11.

‡ At a vacation exercise, &c. Ver. 91. Milton was now aged but nineteen.

THE poets, both ancient and modern, are obliged to the rivers for some of their most striking descriptions. The Tiber, and the Nile of Virgil, the Aufidus of Horace, the Sabrina of Milton, and the Scamander of Homer, are among their capital figures.

THE influences and effects of peace, and its consequence, a diffusive commerce, are expressed by selecting such circumstances, as are best adapted to strike the imagination by lively pictures; the selection of which chiefly constitutes true poetry. An historian or prose-writer might say, "Then shall the most
"distant nations croud into my port:" a poet sets before your eyes "the ships of uncouth
"form," that shall arrive in the Thames *;

And *feather'd* people croud my wealthy side;
And *naked* youths, and *painted* chiefs admire
Our speech, our colour, and our strange *attire*.

And the benevolence and poetry of the succeeding wish, are worthy admiration,

* Ver. 400. et seq.

Till the freed Indians, in their native groves,
 Reap their own fruits, and woo their fable loves;
 Peru once more a race of kings behold,
 And other Mexicos be roof'd with gold *.

The two epithets *native* and *fable* have peculiar elegance and force; and as Peru was particularly famous for its long succession of Incas, and Mexico for many magnificent works of massy gold, there is great propriety in fixing the restoration of the grandeur of each to that object, for which each was once so remarkable.

THE groupe of allegorical personages that succeeds the last mentioned lines, are worthy the pencil of Rubens or Julio Romano: it may, perhaps, however be wished that the epithets *barbarous* (discord), *mad* (ambition), *bateful* (envy) †, had been particular and picturesque, instead of general and indiscriminating; though it may possibly be urged, that in describing the dreadful inhabitants of the portal of hell, Virgil has not always used

* Ver. 407.

† Ver. 411. et seq.

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such adjuncts and epithets as a painter or statuary might work after ; he says only *ultrices CURÆ*, *mortiferum BELLUM*, *mala MENTIS GAUDIA* ; particularly, *malefuada* is only applied to FAMES, instead of a word that might represent the meagre and ghastly figure intended. I make no scruple of adding, that in this famous passage, Virgil has exhibited no images so lively and distinct, as these living figures painted by POPE, each of them with their proper insignia and attributes.

— ENVY her own snakes shall feel *,
And PERSECUTION mourn his broken wheel ;
There FACTION roar, REBELLION bite her chain,
And gasping FURIES thirst for blood in vain.

A PERSON of no small rank has informed me, that Mr. Addison was inexpressibly chagrined at this noble conclusion of WINDSOR-Forest, both as a politician and as a poet. As a politician, because it so highly celebrated that treaty of peace which he deemed so pernicious to the liberties of Europe ; and as a

* Ver. 417. et seq.

poet, because he was deeply conscious that his own CAMPAIGN, that gazette in rhyme, contained no strokes of such genuine and sublime poetry as the conclusion before us.

IT is one of the greatest and most pleasing arts of descriptive poetry, to introduce moral sentences and instructions in an oblique and indirect manner, in places where one naturally expects only painting and amusement. We have virtue, as POPE remarks, * put upon us by surprize, and are pleased to find a thing where we should never have looked to meet with it. I must do a noble English poet the justice to observe, that it is this particular art that is the very distinguishing excellence of COOPER'S-HILL; throughout which, the descriptions of places, and images raised by the poet, are still tending to some hint, or leading into some reflection, upon moral life, or political institution; much in the same manner as the real sight of such scenes and prospects is apt to give the mind a

* Iliad. B. 16. in the notes: Ver. 465.

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composed turn, and incline it to thoughts and contemplations that have a relation to the object. This is the great charm of the incomparable ELEGY written in a Country Church-Yard. Having mentioned the rustic monuments and simple epitaphs of the swains, the amiable poet falls into a very natural reflection :

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingring look behind ?

OF this art POPE has exhibited some specimens in the poem we are examining, but not so many as might be expected from a mind so strongly inclined to a moral way of writing. After speaking of hunting the hare, he immediately subjoins, much in the spirit of Denham,

Beasts urg'd by us their fellow beasts pursue,
And learn of man each other to undo *.

* Ver. 124.

When

Where he is describing the tyrannies formerly exercised in this kingdom,

Cities laid waste, they storm'd the dens and caves,

He instantly adds, with an indignation becoming a true lover of liberty,

For wiser brutes were backward to be slaves*.

BUT I am afraid our author in the following passage has fallen into a fault very uncommon in his writings, a reflection that is very far-fetched and forced ;

Here waving groves a chequer'd scene display,
And part admit, and part exclude the day ;
As some coy nymph her lover's warm address
Nor quite indulges, nor can quite repress †.

Bohours would rank this comparison among false thoughts and Italian conceits ; such particularly as abound in the works of Marino. The fallacy consists in giving design and artifice to the wood, as well as to the coquette ; and in putting the light of the sun and the warmth of a lover on a level.

* Ver. 50.

† Ver. 16.

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A PATHETIC reflection, properly introduced into a descriptive poem, will have greater force and beauty, and more deeply interest a reader, than a moral one. When POPE therefore has described a pheasant shot, he breaks out into a very masterly exclamation;

Ah! what avail his glossy varying dyes,
His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes,
The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold *.

THIS exquisite picture heightens the distress, and powerfully excites the commiseration of the reader. Under this head, it would be unpardonable to omit a capital, and, I think, the most excellent example extant, of the beauty here intended, in the third Georgic of Virgil †. The poet having mournfully described a steer struck with a pestilence, and falling down dead in the middle of his work, artfully reminds us of his former services;

* Ver. 115.

† Ver. 525.

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*Quid labor aut benefacta juvant? Quid vomere terras
Invertisse graves *? — — —*

This circumstance would have been sufficient, as it raised our pity from a motive of gratitude; but with this circumstance the tender Virgil was not content; what he adds therefore of the natural undeviating temperance of the animal, who cannot have contracted disease by excess, and who for that reason deserved a better fate, is moving beyond compare:

— Atqui non Massica Bacchi
Munera, non illis epulæ nocuere repostæ!
Frondebibus, et victu pascuntur simplicis herbæ;
Pocula sunt fontes liquidi, atque exercita cursu
Flumina, nec somnos abruptis cura salubres.

OF English poets, perhaps, none have excelled the ingenious Mr. Dyer in this oblique instruction, into which he frequently steals imperceptibly, in his little descriptive poem entitled *GRONGAR HILL*, where he disposes

* By the epithet *GRAVES* Virgil insinuates, after his manner, the difficulty and laboriousness of the work.

every

every object so as it may give occasion for some observation on human life. Denham himself is not superiour to Mr. Dyer in this particular. After painting a landschape very extensive and diversified, he adds;

Thus is nature's vesture wrought,
To instruct our wandering thought,
Thus she dresses green and gay,
To disperse our cares away!

Another view from his favourite spot, gives him an opportunity for sliding into the following moralities.

* How close and small the hedges lie!
What streaks of meadows cross the eye!
A step methinks may pass the stream,
So little distant dangers seem;
So we mistake the Future's face
Ey'd through Hope's deluding glass.
As yon summits soft and fair,
Clad in colours of the air,
Which to those who journey near,
Barren and brown and rough appear,
Still we tread the same coarse way,
The present's still a cloudy day.

* In this light also his poem on the Ruins of Rome deserves a perusal. *Dodley's Miscell.* vol. i. pag. 78.

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THE unexpected insertion of such reflections, imparts to us the same pleasure that we feel, when in wandering through a wilderness or grove, we suddenly behold in the turning of the walk, a statue of some VIRTUE or MUSE.

IT may be observed in general, that Description of the external beauties of nature, is usually the first effort of a young genius, before he hath studied manners and passions. Some of Milton's most early, as well as most exquisite pieces, are his *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso*; if we may except his Ode on the Nativity of Christ, which is indeed prior in the order of time, and in which a penetrating critic might have discovered the seeds of that boundless imagination, which afterwards was to produce the *Paradise Lost*. This ode, which, by the way, is not sufficiently read nor admired, is also of the descriptive kind; but the objects of it's description are great, and striking to the imagination; the false deities of the Heathen forsaking

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 37

faking their temples on the birth of our
faviour; divination and oracles at an end;
which facts, though perhaps not historically
true, are poetically beautiful.

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament !
From haunted spring, and dale
Edg'd with poplar pale,
The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
With flower-enwoven tresses torn
The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn*,
The lovers of poetry, and to such only I
write, will not be displeased at my presenting
them also with the following image, which
is so strongly conceived, that methinks I see
at this instant the dæmon it represents;

And fullen Moloch fled
Hath left in shadows dread,
His burning idol all of blackest hue;
In vain with cimbals ring
They call the grievous king,
In dismal dance about the furnace blue*.

* On the Morning of Christ's nativity. Newton's edition, octavo. Vol. ii. pag. 28, 29, of the miscellaneous poems.

† See also verses written at a Solemn music, and on the Passion, in the same volume; and a vacation exercise, pag. 9. in all which are to be found many strokes of the sublime.

Attention

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Attention is irresistibly awakened and engaged by that air of solemnity, and enthusiasm, that reigns in the following stanzas :

The oracles are dumb *,
No voice or hideous hum,
Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving;
No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
Inspires the pale-ey'd priest from the prophetic cell.

Such is the power of true poetry, that one is almost inclined to believe the superstitions here alluded to, to be real; and the succeeding circumstances make one start and look around;

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
The lars and lemurs moan with midnight plaint;
In urns and altars round
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the flamens at their service quaint !

Methinks we behold the priests interrupted in the middle of the secret ceremonies they were performing, " in their temples dim," gazing with ghastly eyes on each other, and

* Pag. 28.

terrified

terrified, and wondering from whence these aerial voices should proceed! I have dwelt chiefly on this ode as much less celebrated than *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, which are now universally known; but which by a strange fatality lay in a sort of obscurity, the private enjoyment of a few curious readers, till they were set to admirable music by Mr. Handel. And indeed this volume of Milton's miscellaneous poems has not till very lately met with suitable regard. Shall I offend any rational admirer of POPE by remarking, that these juvenile descriptive poems of Milton, as well as his latin elegies, are of a strain far more exalted than any the former author can boast? Let me add at the same time, what justice obliges me to add, that they are far more incorrect. For in the very ode before us, occur one or two passages, that are puerile and affected, to a degree not to be paralleled in the purer, but less elevated, compositions of POPE. The season being winter, when Jesus was born, Milton says,

Nature

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Nature, in awe to HIM *,
Had doff'd her gawdy trim.

And afterwards observes, in a very epigrammatic and forced thought, unsuitable to the dignity of the subject and of the rest of the ode, that, " she wooed the air, to hide her guilty front with innocent snow,"

And on her naked shame †,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The faintly veil of maiden white to throw,
Confounded that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

" C'est assez, to apply the words of the sensible Voltaire, d'avoir cru appercevoir quelques erreurs d'invention dans ce grand genie ; c'est une consolation pour un esprit aussi borné que le mien, d'être bien persuadé que le plus grands 'hommes se trompent comme le vulgaire."

* This conceit, with the rest, however is more excusable, if we recollect how great a reader, especially at this time, Milton was of the Italian Poets. It is certain that Milton, in the beginning of the ode, had the third sonnet of Petrarch strong in his fancy,

Era 'l giorno, ch 'al sol si scoloraro
Per la pietà del suo fattore i rai;
Quand', &c.

† Milton's Miscellaneous Poems, vol. ii. pag. 19.

IT

IT would be unpardonable to conclude these remarks on descriptive poesy, without taking notice of the SEASONS of Thomson, who had peculiar and powerful talents for this species of composition. Let the reader therefore pardon a digression, if such it be, on his merits and character.

THOMSON was blessed with a strong and copious fancy ; he hath enriched poetry with a variety of new and original images, which he painted from nature itself, and from his own actual observations : his descriptions have therefore a distinctness and truth, which are utterly wanting to those, of poets who have only copied from each other, and have never looked abroad on the objects themselves. Thomson was accustomed to wander away into the country for days and for weeks, attentive to, “ each rural sight, each rural
“ sound ;” while many a poet who has dwelt for years in the Strand, has attempted to describe fields and rivers, and generally succeeded accordingly. Hence that nauseous

G

repetition

repetition of the same circumstances; hence that disgusting impropriety of introducing what may be called a set of hereditary images, without proper regard to the age, or climate, or occasion, in which they were formerly used. Though the diction of the SEASONS is sometimes harsh and inharmonious, and sometimes turgid and obscure, and though in many instances, the numbers are not sufficiently diversified by different pauses, yet is this poem on the whole, from the numberless strokes of nature in which it abounds, one of the most captivating and amusing in our language, and which, as its beauties are not of a fugacious kind, as depending on particular customs and manners, will ever be perused with delight. The scenes of Thomson are frequently as wild and romantic as those of Salvator Rosa, pleasingly varied with precipices and torrents, and "castled cliffs," and deep vallies, with piny mountains, and the gloomiest caverns. Innumerable are the little circumstances in his descriptions, totally unobserved by all his predecessors.

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deceffors. What poet hath ever taken notice
of the leaf, that towards the end of autumn,

Inceffant ruffles from the mournful grove *,
Oft startling fuch as, ftudious, walk below,
And flowly circles through the waving air ?

Or who, in fpeaking of a fummer evening
hath ever mentioned,

The quail that clamouers for his running mate ?

Or the following natural image at the fame
time of the year ?

Wide o'er the thiftly lawn, as fwells the breeze,
A whitening flower of vegetable down
Amufive floats †. — — —

In what other poet, do we find the filence
and expectation that precedes an April flower
infifted on, as in ver. 165 of SPRING ? Or
where,

The ftealing flower is fcarce to patter heard,
By fuch as wander through the foreft walks,
Beneath th' umbrageous multitude of leaves ‡.

* Ver. 1000.

† Ver. 1645.

‡ Ver. 176.

How full, particular and picturesque is this
 assemblage of circumstances that attend a very
 keen frost in a night of winter !

Loud rings the frozen earth, and hard reflects
 A double noise ; while at his evening watch
 The village dog deters the nightly thief ;
 The heifer lows ; the distant water-fall
 Swells in the breeze ; and with the hasty tread
 Of traveller, the hollow-sounding plain
 Shakes from afar *. — — — —

In no one subject are common writers more
 confused and unmeaning, than in their
 descriptions of rivers, which are generally
 said only to wind and to murmur, while
 their qualities and courses are seldom accu-
 rately marked. Examine the exactness of the
 ensuing description, and consider what a per-
 fect idea it communicates to the mind.

Around th'adjoining brook, that purls along
 The vocal grove, now fretting o'er a rock,
 Now scarcely moving through a reedy pool,
 Now starting to a sudden stream, and now
 Gently diffus'd into a limpid plain ;
 A various groupe the herds and flocks compose,
 Rural confusion † ! — — — —

* Winter, Ver. 735.

† Summer, Ver. 477.

A groupe

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A groupe worthy the pencil of Giacomo da Bassano, and so minutely delineated, that he might have worked from this sketch ;

— — — On the grassy bank
Some ruminating lie ; while others stand
Half in the flood, and often bending sip
The circling surface. — — —

He adds, that the ox in the middle of them,

— — — — From his sides
The troublous insects lash, to his sides
Returning still *. — — — —

A natural circumstance, that to the best of my remembrance hath escaped even the natural Theocritus. Nor do I recollect that any poet hath been struck with the murmurs of the numberless insects, that swarm abroad at the noon of a summer's day ; as attendants of the evening indeed, they have been mentioned ;

Resounds the living surface of the ground :
Nor undelightful is the ceaseless hum
To him who muses through the woods at noon ;
Or drowsy shepherd, as he lies reclin'd
With half-shut eyes *. — — —

* Summer, Ver. 485. et seq.

* Summer, Ver. 299.

But

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But the novelty and nature we admire in the descriptions of Thomson are by no means his only excellencies; he is equally to be praised, for impressing on our minds the effects, which the scene delineated would have on the present spectator or hearer. Thus having spoken of the roaring of the savages in a wilderness of Africa, he introduces a captive, who though just escaped from * prison and slavery under the tyrant of Morocco, is so terrified and astonished at the dreadful uproar, that

The wretch half wishes for his bonds again.

Thus also having described a caravan lost and overwhelmed in one of those whirlwinds that so frequently agitate and lift up the whole sands of the desert, he finishes his picture by adding that,

— — — In Cairo's crowded streets *,
Th' impatient merchant, wondering waits in vain,
And Mecca saddens at the long delay.

And thus, lastly, in describing the pestilence that destroyed the British troops at the siege

* Summer, Ver. 925.

* Ver. 966.

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 47

of Carthage, he has used a circumstance inimitably lively, picturesque, and striking to the imagination; for he says that the admiral not only heard the groans of the sick that echoed from ship to ship, but that he also pensively stood, and listened at midnight to the dashing of the waters, occasioned by throwing the dead bodies into the sea;

Heard, nightly, plung'd into the sullen waves,
The frequent corse *. — — — —

A minute and particular enumeration of circumstances judiciously selected, is what chiefly discriminates poetry from history, and renders the former, for that reason, a more close and faithful representation of nature than the latter. And if our poets would accustom themselves to contemplate fully every object, before they attempted to describe it, they would not fail of giving their readers more new images than they generally do †.

THESE

* Ver. 1035.

† A summer evening, for instance, after a shower, has been frequently described: but never, that I can recollect, so justly as
in

THESE observations on Thomson, which however would not have been so large, if there had been already any considerable criticism on his character, might be still aug-

in the following lines, whose greatest beauty is that hinted above, a simple enumeration of the appearances of nature, and of what is actually to be seen at such a time. They are not unworthy the correct and pure Tibullus.

Vespere sub verno, tandem actis imbris, æther
 Guttatim sparsis rorat apertus aquis.
 Aureus abrupto curvamine desuper arcus
 Fulget, et ancipiti lumine tingit agros.
 Continuo sensus pertentat frigoris aura
 Vivida, et insinuans mulcet amœnus odor.
 Pallentes sparsim accrescunt per pascua fungi,
 Lætius et torti graminis herba viret.
 Plurimus annosâ decussus ab arbore limax
 In putri lentum tramite sulcat iter.
 Splendidus accendit per dumos lampida vermis,
 Roscida dum tremulâ femita luce micat.

These are the particular circumstances that usually succeed a shower at that season, and yet these are new and untouched by any other writer. The *Carmina Quadagesimalia*, volume the second, printed at Oxford 1748, from whence this is transcribed, (page 14,) contain many copies of exquisite descriptive poetry, in a genuine classical style. See particularly *The Rivers*, page 4. *The Morning*, page 12. *The House of Care*, from Spenser, page 16. *The Mahometan paradise*, page 32. *The Trees of different soils*, page 63. *The Bird's nest*, page 82. Geneva, page 89. *Virgil's tomb*, page 97. *The Indian*, page 118. *The House of Discord*, page 133. *Columbus first discovering the land of the West Indies*, page 125. &c.

mented

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 49

mented by an examination and developement of the beauties in the Loves of the birds, in *SPRING*, verse 580. A view of the torrid zone in *SUMMER*, verse 626. The rise of fountains and rivers in *AUTUMN*, verse 781. A man perishing in the snows, in *WINTER*, verse 277. The wolves descending from the Alps, and a view of winter within the polar circle, verse 809, which are all of them highly-finished originals, excepting a few of those blemishes intimated above. *WINTER* is in my apprehension the most valuable of these four poems ; the scenes of it, like those of *Il Penferoso* of Milton, being of that awful, solemn, and pensive kind, on which a great genius best delights to dwell.

POPE it seems was of opinion, that descriptive poetry is a composition as absurd as a feast made up of fauces: and I know many other persons that think meanly of it. I will not presume to say it is equal, either in dignity or utility, to those compositions that lay open the internal constitution of man, and

H that

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that IMITATE characters, manners, and sentiments. I may however remind such contemners of it, that, in a sister-art, landscape-painting claims the very next rank to history-painting; being ever preferred to single portraits, to pieces of still-life, to droll figures, to fruit and flower-pieces; that Titian thought it no diminution of his genius, to spend much of his time in works of the former species; and that, if their principles lead them to condemn Thomson, they must also condemn the Georgics of Virgil, and the greatest part of the noblest descriptive poem extant, I mean that of Lucretius.

WE are next to speak of the LYRIC pieces of POPE. He used to declare, that if Dryden had finished a translation of the Iliad, he would not have attempted one after so great a master; he might have said with more propriety, I will not write a music-ode after Alexander's Feast, which the variety and harmony of its numbers, and the beauty and force of its images, have conspired to place at the
head

head of modern lyric compositions. This of Mr. POPE is, however, indisputably the second of the kind, * “ propior tamen primo quam “ tertio,” to use an expression of Quintilian.

The

* The inferiority of Addison’s Ode, to POPE’s on this subject is manifest and remarkable. What prosaic tameness and insipidity do we meet with in the following lines?

Cecilia’s name does all our numbers grace,
From every voice the tuneful accents fly,
In soaring trebles now it rises high,
And now it sinks and dwells upon the base.

This almost descends to burlesque. What follows is hardly rhyme, and surely not poetry :

Consecrate the place and day,
To music and Cecilia.
Music the greatest *good* that mortals know. —
Music can noble *hints* impart. —

There follows in this stanza, which is the third, a description of a subject very trite, Orpheus drawing the beasts about him. POPE shewed his superiour judgment in taking no notice of this old story, and selecting a more new, as well as more striking incident, in the life of Orpheus. It was the custom of this time, for almost every rhymers to try his hand in an ode on St. Cecilia; we find many despicable rhapsodies, so called, in Tonson’s Miscellanies. We have there also preserved another, and an earlier ode, of Dryden on this subject. One stanza of which I cannot forbear inserting in this note. It was set to music, 1687, by I. Baptista Draghi.

What passion cannot music raise and quell!
When Jubal struck the chorded shell,

The first stanza is almost a perfect concert of itself; every different Instrument is described and illustrated, in numbers, that admirably represent, and correspond, to its different qualities and genius. The beginning of the second stanza, on the power which music exerts over the passions, is a little flat, and by no means equal to the conclusion of that stanza. The animating song that Orpheus sung to the Argonauts, copied from Valerius Flaccus, for that of Apollonius is of a different nature, is the happily chosen subject of the third. On hearing which,

His list'ning brethren stood around,
And wondering on their faces fell,
To worship that celestial sound :
Less than a god they thought there could not dwell,
Within the hollow of that shell,
That spoke so sweetly and so well.
What passion cannot music raise and quell !

This is so complete and engaging a history-piece, that I knew a person of taste who was resolved to have it executed, if an artist could have been found, on one side of his salloon. In which case, said he, the painter has nothing to do, but to substitute colours for words, the design being finished to his hands. The reader doubtless observes the fine effect of the repetition of the last line; as well as the stroke of nature, in making these rude hearers imagine some god lay concealed in this first musician's instrument.

Each

Each chief his sevenfold shield display'd,
And half unsheath'd the shining blade ;

Which effects of the song, however lively, do not equal the force and spirit of what Dryden ascribes to the song of his Grecian artist; for when Timotheus cries out **REVENGE**, raises the furies, and calls up to Alexander's view a troop of Grecian ghosts that were slain and left unburied, inglorious and forgotten, each of them waving a torch in his hand, and pointing to the hostile temples of the Persians, and demanding vengeance of their prince, he instantly started from his throne,

— Seiz'd a flambeau with zeal to destroy,

while Thais and the attendant princes rushed out with him, to set fire to the city. The whole train of imagery in this stanza is alive, sublime, and animated to an unparallelled degree; the poet had so strongly possessed himself of the action described, that he places it fully before the eyes of the reader.

THE descent of Orpheus into hell is gracefully introduced in the fourth stanza, as it naturally

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naturally flowed from the subject of the preceding one ; the description of the infernal regions is well imagined, and the effects of the musician's lyre on the inhabitants of hell, are elegantly translated from the fourth Georgic of Virgil *, and happily adapted to the subject in question. The supplicating song at the beginning of the fifth stanza, is highly pathetic and poetical, especially when he conjures the powers below,

By the hero's armed shades
Glittering through the gloomy glades,
By the youths that dy'd for love
Wand'ring in the myrtle grove ;

These images are picturesque and appropriated;
and these are such notes as might,

Draw iron tears down Pluto's cheek, †
And make hell grant what love did seek.

But the numbers that conclude this stanza are of so burlesque and ridiculous a kind, and have so much the air of a drinking song at a county

* Ver. 480.

† Milton's *Il Penseroso*.

election,

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election, that one is amazed and concerned to find them in a serious ode, and in an ode of a writer eminently skilled, in general, in accommodating his sounds to his sentiments.

Thus song could prevail
O'er death and o'er hell,
A conquest how hard and how glorious !
Tho' fate had fast bound her
With Styx nine times round her,
Yet music and love were victorious.

One would imagine that John Dennis, or some hero of the Dunciad, had been here attempting to travesty this description of the restoration of Eurydice to life. It is observable, that this is the very measure, Addison thought was proper to use in the comic character of Sir Trusty; by the introduction of which he has so strangely debased and degraded his opera of Rosamond.

How unhappy is he
That is ty'd to a she,
And fam'd for his wit and his beauty ;
For of us pretty fellows,
Our wives are so jealous,
They ne'er have enough of our duty. *

* Act I. Scene II. See also, Scene IV. Act I. A song of
Grideline and Trusty. Act III. Scene IV.

These

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These numbers therefore, according to Addison's ear, conveyed a low and ludicrous idea, instead of being expressive of triumph and exaltation, the images here intended to be impressed by POPE.

VIRGIL is again imitated throughout the sixth stanza, which describes the behaviour of Orpheus on the second loss of Eurydice. I wish POPE had inserted that striking circumstance, so strongly imagined, of a certain melancholy murmur, or rather dismal shriek, that was heard all around the lakes of Avernus, the moment Orpheus looked back on his wife;

—— Terque fragor stagnis auditus Avernis *.

And as prosopopeias are a great beauty in lyric poetry, surely he should not have omitted those natural and pathetic exclamations of Eurydice, the moment she was snatched back, and which she uttered as she was gradually sinking to the shades, especially where she movingly takes her last adieu,

Jamque vale! — — —

* Georgic. 4. 493.

And

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And adds, that she is now surrounded with a vast darkness, “feror ingenti circumdata nocte,” and in vain stretching out her feeble arms towards him,

*Invalidasque tibi tendens, heu ! non tua, palmas *.*

This lively and pathetic attitude would have made a striking picture under the hands of POPE. The reader, I presume, feels the effect of the judicious placing in the verse, *heu ! non tua*, and of its repetition after *tibi*. The places in which Orpheus, according to POPE, made his lamentations, are not so wild, so savage and dismal, as those mentioned by Virgil ; to introduce him “beside the falls of fountains,” conveys not such an image of desolation and despair, as the caverns on the banks of Strymon and Tanais, the Hyperborean deserts, and the Riphæan solitudes. And to say of Hebrus, only, that it “rolls in meanders,” is flat and frigid, and does not heighten the melancholy of the place. There is an antithesis in the succeeding lines,

* Ver. 498.

I

“ he

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“ he *glows* amid Rhodope’s *snows*,” which I hope the poet did not intend, as it would be a trivial and puerile conceit. The death of Orpheus is expressed with a beautiful brevity and abruptness, suitable to the nature of the ode;

Hark ! Hæmus resounds with the Bacchanals cries,

Ah ! see he dies !

Yet ev’n in death Eurydice he *sung*.

Instead of *sung*, Virgil says *vocabat*, which is more natural and tender ; and Virgil adds a very moving epithet, that he called *misæram* Eurydicen. I am sensible POPE never intended an exact translation of the passages of the Georgics here alledged ; I only hint, that, in my humble judgment, he has omitted some of the most striking incidents in the story. I have lately seen a manuscript ode, entitled, “ On the Use and Abuse of Poetry,” in which Orpheus is considered in another, and a higher light, according to ancient mythology, as the first legislator and civilizer of mankind. I shall here insert a stanza of it, containing part of what relates to this subject.

A N T I S-

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Such was the wife Orpheus' moral song,
 The lonely cliffs and caves among ;
 From hollow oak, or mountain-den,
 He drew the naked, gazing men,
 Or where in turf-built sheds, or rushy bowers,
 They shiver'd in cold wintry showers,
 Or sunk in heapy snows ;
 Then sudden, while his melting music stole
 With powerful magic o'er each softening soul,
 Society, and law, and sacred order rose.

E P O D E II.

Father of peace and arts ! he first the city built ;
 No more the neighbour's blood was by his neighbour spilt ;
 He taught to till, and separate the lands ;
 He fix'd the roving youths in Hymen's myrtle bands ;
 Whence dear domestic life began,
 And all the charities that soften'd man :
 The babes that in their fathers faces smil'd,
 With lisping blandishments their rage beguil'd,
 And tender thoughts inspir'd — &c.

I am not permitted to transcribe any more,
 and therefore return to POPE again.

THE beginning of the last stanza of the ode
 here examined, seems to be a repetition of the

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subject of the second, the power of music over the passions, which may perhaps be reckoned a blameable tautology; especially as these lines,

Music the fiercest grief can charm,
And fate's severest rage disarm;
Music can soften pain to ease,
And make despair and madness please;

are inferior, I am afraid, to the former on the same subjects, which contain beautiful and poetical personifications;

Melancholy lifts her head,
Morpheus rouses from his bed,
Sloth unfolds her arms and wakes,
Lifting Envy drops her snakes;
Intestine war no more our passions wage,
And giddy factions hear away their rage.

It is observable, that this Ode of POPE, and the Alexander's Feast of Dryden, conclude with an epigram of four lines; a species of wit as flagrantly unsuitable to the dignity, and as foreign to the nature, of the lyric, as it is of the epic muse.

It

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 61

It is to be regretted, that Mr. Handel has not set to music the former, as well as the latter, of these celebrated odes, in which he has displayed the combined powers of verse and voice, to a wonderful degree. No poem indeed, affords so much various matter for a composer to work upon; as Dryden has here introduced and expressed all the greater passions, and as the transitions from one to the other are sudden and impetuous. Of which we feel the effects, in the pathetic description of the fall of Darius, that immediately succeeds the joyous praises of Bacchus. The symphony, and air particularly, that accompanies the four words, “ fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen,” is strangely moving *, and consists of a few simple

* The mention of this pathetic air, reminds me of a story of the celebrated Lully, who having been one day accused of never setting any thing to music, but the languid verses of Quinault, was immediately animated with the reproach, and as it were seized with a kind of enthusiasm; he ran instantly to his harpsichord, and striking a few cords, sung in recitative these four lines in the Iphigenia of Racine, which are full of the strongest imagery, and are therefore much more difficult to express in music, than verses of mere sentiment,

Un

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simple and touching notes, without any of those intricate variations, and affected divisions, into which, in compliance with a vicious and vulgar taste, this great master hath sometimes descended. Even this piece of Handel, so excellent on the whole, is not free from one or two blemishes of this sort, particularly in the air, "With ravished ears," &c.

THE moderns have perhaps practised no species of poetry with so little success, and with such indisputable inferiority to the

Un prêtre environné d' une foule cruelle
Portera sur ma fille une main criminelle,
Dechirera son sein, et d' un œil curieux,
Dans son cœur palpitant consultera les dieux.

One of the company has often declared that they all thought themselves present at this dreadful spectacle, and that the notes with which Lully accompanied these words, erected the hair of their heads with horror.

The opinion of Boileau concerning music is remarkable; he asserts, qu' on ne peut jamais faire un bon opera; parceque la musique ne sauroit narrer; que les passions n' y peuvent etre peinte dans toute l'etendue qu' elles demandent; que d'ailleurs elle ne sauroit souvent mettre en chant les expressions vraiment sublimes et courageuses.

ancients,

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ancients, as the ODE ; which seems owing to the harshness and untuneableness of modern languages, abounding in monosyllables, and crowded with consonants. This particularly is the case of the English, whose original is Teutonic, and which therefore, is not so musical as the Italian, the Spanish, or even the French, as not having so great a quantity of words derived from the Latin. But the Latin language itself, as well as all others, must yield to the unparalleled sweetness and copiousness of the Greek. Tantò est sermo græcus latino jucundior, says Quintilian, ut nostri poetæ, quoties dulce carmen esse voluerunt, illorum id nominibus exornent *.”

* He gives some instances that are curious and worth attention. “ Quid quod pleraque nos illa quasi mugiente literâ cludimus M, quâ nullum Græcè verbum cadit ? At illi N jucundam et in fine præcipuè quasi tinnientem, illius loco ponunt, quæ est apud nos rarissimè in clausulis. Quid quod syllabæ nostræ in B literam et D innituntur ? adeò asperè, ut plerique non antiquissimorum quidem, sed tamen veterum mollire tentaverint, non solum *aversa* pro *adversis* dicendo, sed et in præpositione B literæ absonam et ipsam S subjiendo.” Apply these observations with proper alterations to the English tongue. Quintil. l. xii. c. 10.

What

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What line, even in the Italian poets, is so soft and mellifluous, as *

Αλλ' αἰεὶ ξιφυροῖο λυγροτατοῦτος ᾠδῆας ?

Or as, in the tender Bion,

Διαζῶ τον Ἀδωνιν, ἀπαλὸν καλὸν Ἀδωνος,

to instance in no more ? If we cast a transient view over the most celebrated of the modern lyrics, we may observe, that the stanza of Petrarch, which has been adopted by all his successors, displeases the ear, by its tedious uniformity, and by the number of identical cadences. And indeed to speak truth, there appears to be little valuable in Petrarch, except the purity of his diction. His sentiments even of love, are metaphysical and far fetched, neither is there much variety in his subjects, or fancy in his method of treating them. Metafasio is a much better lyric poet. When Boileau attempted an ode, he exhibited a glaring proof, of what will be more fully insisted on in the course of this Essay, that the writer whose grand, characteristical talent is

* Odyf. 4. 565.

fatyric

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satyric or moral poetry, will never succeed, with equal merit, in the higher branches of his art. In his ode on the taking Namur, are instances of the * BOMBASTIC, of the PROSAIC, and of the PUERILE. And it is no small confirmation of the ruling passion of this author, that he could not conclude his ode, but with a severe stroke on his old antagonist Perrault, though the majesty of this species of compositions is so much injured, by descending to personal satire. The name of Malherbe is respectable, as he was the first reformer of the French poesy, and the first who gave his countrymen any idea of a legitimate ode, though his own pieces have hardly any thing but harmony to recommend them. The Odes of la Motte, are fuller of delicate

* An instance of the FIRST, is to be found in the third stanza. Of the SECOND, in the ninth stanza,

Qui domta Lille, Coutrai,
Gand, la superbe Espagnole,
Saint Omer, Bezançon, Dole,
Ypres, Mastricht, et Cambrai.

Of the THIRD fort, is, his making a star or comet, fatal to his enemies, of the white feather, which the king usually wore in his hat.

K

sentiment,

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sentiment, and philosophical reflection, than of imagery, figures, and poetry. There are particular stanzas eminently good, but not one entire ode. Some of Rousseau, particularly that to Fortune, and some of his psalms; and one or two of Voltaire, particularly, to the king of Prussia, on his accession to the throne, and on Meaupertuis's travels to the north, to measure the degrees of the meridian towards the equator, seem to arise above that correct mediocrity, which distinguishes the lyric poetry of the French. In this ode of Voltaire, we find a prosopopeia of Americus, and afterwards a speech of Newton, on the design of this traveller and his companions, that approach to the sublime,

Comme ils parloient ainsi, Newtons dan l'empirée,
 Newton les regardoit, et du ciel entr'ouvert
 Confirmez, disoit il, a la terre éclairée
 Ce que j'ai decouvert.

I hope I shall not transgress a very sensible observation of POPE, who would have a true critic be

Still pleas'd to praise, yet not afraid to blame,

if

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 67

if I should say, we have lately seen two or three lyric pieces, superiour to any he has left us; I mean an Ode on Lyric Poetry, and another to Lord Huntingdon, by Dr. Akenfide; and a Chorus of British Bards, by Mr. Gilbert West, at the end of the Institution of the Order of the Garter. Both these are written with regular returns of the Strophe, Antistrophe, and Epode, which give a truly Pindaric variety to the numbers, that is wanting not only to the best French and Italian, but even to the best Latin odes. In the pieces here commended, the figures are strong, and the transitions bold, and there is a just mixture of sentiment and imagery; and particularly, they are animated with a noble spirit of liberty. I must refer the reader to the characters of Alcæus and of Milton in the two first, and to the stanza of Mr. West's ode, on the barons procuring magna charta, which I shall insert at length.

On yonder plain,
 Along whose willow-fringed side
 The silver-footed Nairs, spotive train,
 Down the smooth Thames amid the cygnets glide,
 K 2 I saw,

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I saw, when at thy reconciling word,
 Injustice, anarchy, intestine jarr,
 Despotic insolence, the wasting sword,
 And all the brazen throats of civil war
 Were hush'd in peace; from his imperious throne
 Hurl'd furious down,
 Abash'd, dismay'd,
 Like a chas'd lion to the savage shade
 Of his own forests fell Oppression fled,
 With vengeance brooding in his fullen breast.
 Then Justice fearless rais'd her decent head,
 Heal'd every grief, each wrong redrest;
 While round her valiant squadrons stood,
 And bade her awful tongue demand,
 From vanquish'd John's reluctant hand,
 The DEED OF FREEDOM purchas'd with their blood *.

THE next LYRIC compositions of POPE, are two choruses inserted in a very heavy tragedy altered from Shakespear by the Duke of Buckingham; in which we see, that the most accurate observation of dramatic rules without genius is of no effect. These choruses are extremely elegant and harmonious; but are they not chargeable with the fault, which

* Doddsley's Miscellanies, vol. ii. pag. 152. See also in the same volume, an excellent ode of Mr. Cobb.

Aristotle

Aristotle imputes to many of Euripides, that they are foreign and adventitious to the subject, and contribute nothing towards the advancement of the main action? Whereas the chorus ought, “ *Μοριον ειναι τε ολν, και συν-αλωνιζεσθαι* * , to be a part or member of the one Whole, cooperate with it, and help to accelerate the intended event; as is constantly, adds the philosopher, the practice of Sophocles. Whereas these reflections of POPE on the baneful influences of war, on the arts and learning, and on the universal power of love, seem to be too general, are not sufficiently appropriated, do not rise from the subject and occasion, and might be inserted with equal propriety in twenty other tragedies. This remark of Aristotle, though he does not himself produce any examples, may be verified from the following, among many others. In the Phœnicians of Euripides, they sing a long and very beautiful, but ill placed, hymn to Mars; I speak of that which begins so nobly,

* Κεφ. ιη. της ποιητικής.

Ω πολυμυχοθ.

Ω πολυμοχθὼς Ἀρης, τί ποθ' αἰμαίνῃ

Καὶ Δανάην καίχῃ, Βρομὴν παρ' αἰμῶνος ὀφθαίη * ;

“ O direful Mars! why art thou still delight-
 “ ed with blood and with death, and why
 “ an enemy to the feasts of Bacchus?” And
 a still more glaring instance may be brought
 from the end of the third act of the Troades,
 in which the story of Ganymede is introduced
 not very artificially†. To these may be added
 that exquisite ode in praise of Apollo, de-
 scriptive of his birth and victories, which we
 find in the Iphigenia in Tauris‡.

ON the other hand, the choruses of Sopho-
 cles never desert the subject of each particular
 drama, and all their sentiments and reflections
 are drawn from the situation of the principal
 personage of the fable. Nay Sophocles hath
 artfully found a method of making those
 poetical descriptions, with which the cho-
 ruses of the ancients abound, carry on the
 chief design of the piece; and has by these

* Ver. 793.

† Ver. 795.

‡ Ver. 1235. et seq.

means

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means accomplished what is a great difficulty in writing tragedy, has united poetry with propriety. In the * *Philoctetes* the chorus takes a natural occasion, at verse 694, to give a minute and moving picture of the solitary life of that unfortunate hero; and when afterwards at verse 855, pain has totally exhausted the strength and spirits of *Philoctetes*, and it is necessary for the plot of the tragedy that he should fall asleep, it is then, that the chorus breaks out into an exquisite ode to sleep. As in the *Antigone*, with equal beauty and decorum in an address to the god of love, at verse 791 of that play. And thus lastly, when the birth of *Edipus* is doubtful, and his parents unknown, the chorus suddenly exclaims, “ *Τίς σε, τέκνον, τίς σ’ ἐλίκλε των μαχραιωνων; &c.* “ From which, O my son, of the im-

* The subject and scene of this tragedy, so romantic and uncommon, are highly pleasing to the imagination. See particularly his description of his being left in this desolate island, v. 280. His lamentation for the loss of his bow. v. 1140. and also 1185. and his last adieu to the island. 1508. One may here observe by the way, that the ancients thought bodily pains, and wounds, &c. proper objects to be represented on the stage.

“ mortal

“ mortal gods, didst thou spring? Was it
 “ some nymph, a favourite of Pan that haunts
 “ the mountains; or some daughter of Apollo,
 “ for this god loves the remote rocks and
 “ caverns, who bore you? Or was it Mer-
 “ cury who reigns in Cyllene; or did Bac-
 “ chus, Θεὸς ναίων ἐπ’ ἀκρῶν ὄρεων, a god
 “ who dwells on the tops of the mountains,
 “ beget you, on any of the nymphs that
 “ possess Helicon, with whom he frequently
 “ sports?” *

THE judicious author of the tragedy of
 Elfrida, hath given occasion to a kind of
 controversy among the more curious critics,
 concerning the utility of the chorus, which,
 after the model of the ancients, he hath endea-
 voured to revive. To imagine, that the great
 Grecian masters retained it only out of respect
 to its antiquity, and from no intrinsic valuable-
 ness or propriety of the thing, can scarcely be
 imagined. The sentiments of the excellent
 Brumoy are moderate and rational, and seem

* Οἶδν. τυραν. 1118.

to comprehend all that is necessary to be said on this subject. “ I know, says he, the chorus is attended with inconveniences. Sophocles had the address to withdraw his chorus for a few moments, when their absence was necessary, as in the *Ajax*. If the chorus therefore incommodes the poet, and puts him under difficulties, he must charge it solely to his own want of dexterity. What advantage, on the other hand, may he not reap, from a body of actors that fill the stage; that render more lively, striking, and sensible, the continuity of the action, and give it the air of greater PROBABILITY? For it is not natural or conceivable, that a great and illustrious action, such as a revolution in a state, should pass without witnesses. We perceive and feel a kind of void on the stage, on account of the absence of the choruses; and the successful attempt of Racine, who adopted and revived the use of them in his *ATHALIA* and *ESTHER*, were sufficient, one would imagine, to undeceive and convince us, of their importance, and utility. The ancients-treated only of such

L

stories

stories as were publicly transacted ; now the banishment of the chorus has been the necessary consequence of the custom of the moderns, in taking for their Representations all kinds of subjects, and in filling and overcharging the action with incidents and surprises. For how could these various crowded events and incidents, have been possibly introduced in a public place, exposed to the view of courtiers and the people ; while the generality of OUR tragedies turn on particular and private affairs, removed from the view and notice of all men ? The Athenian spectators were ever accustomed to concern themselves in all public affairs, and to be witnesses and judges of them. The modern stage, by its disuse of the chorus, may perhaps have gained a great number of fine subjects for tragedy ; yet, in return, it is burthened with confidents, it loses the continuity of action, and is deprived of the magnificent spectacle that serves to support that continuity, and which is, if I may be allowed the expression, *le fonds, ou l'accompagnement du tableau* *.”

* *Le Theatre de Grecs.* * Tom. i. 104. and 214. and 198.

I THOUGHT it more equitable, as well as more convincing, to quote at large the words of this admirable critic, whose work is one of the most valuable that his elegant nation hath produced, than to adopt, as some have done with small variations, his opinion, without acknowledging the debt. An apology would be necessary for this digression, if it was not my professed design in this Essay, to expatiate into such occasional disquisitions, as naturally arise from the subject; it has however kept us too long from surveying a valuable literary curiosity, I mean the earliest production of POPE, written when he was not twelve years old, his ODE ON SOLITUDE.

THE first sketches of such an artist ought highly to be prized. Different geniuses unfold themselves at different periods of life. In some minds the ore is a long time in ripening. Not only inclination, but opportunity and encouragement, a proper subject, or a proper patron, influence the exertion or the suppression of genius. These stanzas on Solitude, are a strong instance of that contem-

plative and moral turn, which was the distinguishing characteristic of our poet's mind. An ode of Cowley which he produced at the age of thirteen years, is of the same cast, and perhaps not in the least inferiour to this of POPE. The voluminous Lopez de Vega, is commonly, but I fear incredibly, reported by the Spaniards, to have composed verses when he was * five years old; and Torquato Tasso, the second of the Italian poets, for that wonderful original Dante is the first, is said to have recited poems and orations of his own writing, when he was seven. It is however certain, which is more extraordinary, that he produced his Rinaldo in his eighteenth year, no bad precursor to the Gierusalemme Liberata, and no small effort of that genius, which was in due time to shew, how fine an epic poem the Italian language, notwithstanding the vulgar imputation of effeminacy, was capable of supporting.

* It is a certain fact, that S. Bononcini composed and performed an opera, when he was but nine years old.

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THOSE who are fond of biographical anecdotes, which are some of the most amusive and instructive parts of history, will be perhaps pleased with the following particulars in the life of POPE. He frequently declared, that the time of his beginning to write verses, was so very early in his life, that he could scarcely recall it to his memory. When he was yet a child, his father, who had been a merchant in London, and retired to Binfield with about twenty thousand pounds, would frequently order him to make English verses. It seems he was difficult to be pleased, and would make the lad correct them again and again. When at last he approved them, he took great pleasure in perusing them, and would say, "these are good RHYMES." These early praises of a tender and respected parent, cooperating with the natural inclination of the son, might possibly be the causes that fixed our young bard in a resolution of becoming eminent in this art. He was taught to read very early by an aunt; and of his own indefatigable industry learned to write,
by

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by copying printed books, which he executed with great neatness and accuracy. When he was eight years old, he was put under the direction of one Taverner, a priest, who taught him the rudiments of the latin and greek tongues together. About this time he accidentally met with Ogilby's translation of Homer, which, notwithstanding the deadness and insipidity of the versification, arrested his attention by the force of the story. The Ovid of Sandys fell next in his way; and it is said, that the raptures these translations gave him were so strong, that he spoke of them with pleasure to the period of his life. About ten, being now at school at Hide-park corner, whither he went from a popish seminary at Twiford, near Winchester, he was carried sometimes to the playhouse; and being struck, we may imagine, with theatrical representations, he turned the chief events into a kind of play, made up of a number of speeches from Ogilby's translation, connected with verses of his own. He persuaded the upper boys to act this piece, which, from its
curiosity

curiosity, one would have been glad to have beheld. The master's gardener represented the character of Ajax; and the actors were dressed after the pictures of his favourite Ogilby, far the best part of that book, as they were designed and engraved by artists of note. At twelve, he retired with his father into Windsor-Forest; and it was there he first perused the writings of Waller, of Spenser, and of Dryden. Spenser is said to have made a poet of Cowley; that Ogilby should give our author his first poetic pleasures, is a remarkable circumstance. On the first sight of Dryden he abandoned the rest, having now found an author, whose cast was exactly congenial with his own. His works therefore he studied with equal pleasure and attention: he placed them before his eyes as a model; of which more will be said in the course of these papers. He copied not only his harmonious versification, but the very turns of his periods. It was hence he was enabled to give to rhyme all the harmony of which it is capable.

ABOUT

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ABOUT this time, when he was * fifteen years old, he began to write his *ALCANDER*, an epic poem, of which he himself speaks with so much amiable frankness and ingenuity, in a passage restored to the excellent preface before his works. “ I confess there was a time when I was in love with myself, and my first productions were the children of self-love upon innocence. I had made an epic poem, and panegyrics on all the princes of Europe, and I thought myself the greatest genius that ever was. I cannot but regret these delightful visions of my childhood, which, like the fine colours we see when our eyes are shut, are vanished for ever.” Atterbury had perused this early piece, and we may gather from one of his letters, advised him to burn it; though he adds, “ I would have interceded for the first page, and put it, with your leave, among my curiosities.” I have been credibly informed, that some of the anonymous verses, quoted as examples of the

* Nec placet ante annos vates puer: omnia iusto
Tempore proveniant. — — — *Vidæ Poet. l. 1.*

Art of Sinking in Poetry, in the incomparable satire so called, were such as our poet remembered from his own ALCANDER. So sensible of its own errors and imperfections is a mind truly great.

QUINTILIAN, whose knowledge of human nature was consummate, has observed, that nothing quite correct and faultless, is to be expected in very early years, from a truly elevated genius: that a generous extravagance and exuberance are its proper marks, and that a premature exactness is a certain evidence of future flatness and sterility. His words are incomparable, and worthy consideration. * “ Audeat hæc ætas plura, et INVENIAT, et inventis gaudeat, sint licet illa non satis interim ficca et severa. Facile remedium est ubertatis, sterilia nullo labore vincuntur. Illa mihi in pueris natura nimium spei dabit, in quâ INGENIUM judicio præsumitur. Materiam esse primum volo vel abundantior, et ultra quam oportet fufam.

* Lib. 2. Instit. Cap. 4. ad init.

Multum inde decoquent anni, multum ratio limabit, aliquid velut usu ipso deteretur, fit modo unde excidi possit et quod exculpi: erit autem, si non ab initio tenuem laminam duxerimus, et quam cælatura altior rumpat.— Quare mihi ne maturitas quidem ipsa festinet, nec musta in lacu statim austera sint; sic et annos ferent, et vetustate proficient.” This is very strong and masculine sense, expressed and enlivened by a train of metaphors, all of them elegant, and well preserved. Whether these early productions of POPE, would not have appeared to Quintilian to be rather too finished, correct, and pure, and what he would have inferred concerning them, is too delicate a subject for me to enlarge upon. Let me rather add an entertaining anecdote. When Guido and Domenichino had each of them painted a picture in the church of Saint Andrew, Annibal Carrache, their master, was pressed to declare, which of his two pupils had excelled. The picture of Guido represented Saint Andrew on his knees before the cross; that of Domenichino represented the

the flagellation of the same apostle. Both of them in their different kinds were capital pieces, and were painted in fresco, opposite each other, to eternize, as it were, their rivalry and contention. Guido, said Carrache, has performed as a master, and Domenichino as a scholar. But, added he, the work of the scholar is more valuable than that of the master. In truth, one may perceive faults in the picture of Domenichino that Guido has avoided; but then there are noble strokes, not to be found in that of his rival. It was easy to discern a genius that promised to produce beauties, to which the sweet, the gentle, and the graceful Guido would never aspire.

THE last piece that belongs to this section, is the ODE entitled, THE DYING CHRISTIAN TO HIS SOUL, written in imitation of the well known sonnet of Hadrian, addressed to his departing spirit; concerning which it was our author's judicious opinion, that the diminutive epithets with which it abounds, such as *Vagula*, *Blandula*, were by no means ex-

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pressions of levity and indifference, but rather of endearment, of tenderness and concern. This ode was written we find at the desire of Steele; and our poet in a letter to him on that occasion, says—“ You have it, as Cowley calls it, just warm from the brain; it came to me the first moment I waked this morning; yet you’ll see, it was not so absolutely inspiration, but that I had in my head, not only the verses of Hadrian, but the fine fragment of Sappho.”*

It is possible however, that our author might have had another composition in his head, besides those he here refers to; for there is a close and surprising resemblance † between this ode of POPE, and one of an obscure and forgotten rhymers of the age of Charles the second, namely Thomas Flatman; from whose dunghill, as well as from the

* In Longinus, sect. 10. quoted by him, as a model of that Sublime which combines together many various and opposite passions and sensations,” *ἵνα μὴ ἐν τῇ παθὸς φαινηταί, παθὼν δὲ ΣΥΝΘΑΟΣ.*”

† See THE ADVENTURER, vol. 2. II. ed. p. 230.

dregs

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dregs of * Crafhaw, of Carew, of Herbert, and others, (for it is well known he was a great reader of all those poets) POPE has very judiciously collected gold. And the following stanza is perhaps the only valuable one Flatman † has produced.

When on my sick bed I languish,
Full of sorrow, full of anguish,
Fainting, gasping, trembling, crying,
Panting, groaning, speechless, dying;
Methinks I hear some gentle spirit say,
Be not fearful come away!

The third and fourth lines are eminently good and pathetic, and the climax well preserved; the very turn of them is closely copied by POPE; as is likewise the striking circumstance of the dying man's imagining he hears a voice calling him away;

* Crafhaw has very well translated the *dies iræ*, to which translation Roscommon is much indebted, in his Poem on the day of Judgment.

† Of whom says Lord Rochester,
Not that slow drudge in swift Pindaric strains,
Flatman, who Cowley imitates with pains,
And rides a jaded muse, whipt, with loose reins.

Vital

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Vital spark of heavenly flame
 Quit, O quit, this mortal frame;
 Trembling, hoping, lingring, flying,
 O the pain, the bliss of dying!
 Hark! they whisper! angels say,
 Sift'er spirit, come away!

I AM sensible of the difficulty of distinguishing resemblances from thefts; and of what a late critic has urged, that a want of seeming originality arises frequently, not from a barrenness and timidity of genius, but from invincible necessity, and the nature of things: that the works of those who profess an art, whose essence is imitation, must needs be stamped with a close resemblance to each other, since the objects material or animate, extraneous or internal, which they all imitate, lie equally open to the observation of all, and are perfectly similar. Descriptions therefore that are faithful and just, MUST BE UNIFORM AND ALIKE; the first copier may be perhaps entitled to the praise of priority, but a succeeding one ought not certainly to be condemned for plagiarism.

THESE

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THESE general observations however true, do not, I think, extend to the case before us, because not only the thoughts, but even the words are copied; and because the images, especially the last, are such, as are not immediately impressed by sensible objects, and which therefore, on account of their SINGULARITY, did not lie in common for any poet to seize. Let us however moderate the matter, and say, what perhaps is the real fact, that POPE fell into the thoughts of Flatman unawares, and without design; and having formerly read him, imperceptibly adopted this passage, even without knowing that he had borrowed it. That this will frequently happen, is evident from the following curious particulars related by Menage, which, because much has been said of late on this head by many writers of criticism, I shall here insert. " I have often heard M. Chaplain, and Mr. Dandilly declare, that they wrote the following line,

D' arbitres de la paix, de foudres de la guerre;

without

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without knowing it was in Malherbe; and the moment I am making this remark, recollect that the same thing happened to M. Furetiere. I have often heard Corneille declare, that he inserted in his *Polyeucte*, two celebrated lines concerning fortune, without knowing they were the property of M. Godeau bishop of Vence;

Et comme elle a l'éclat du Verre
Elle en a la fragilité —

Godeau had inserted them in an ode to Cardinal Richleiu, fifteen years before *Polyeucte* was written. Porphyry in a fragment of his book on Philology, quoted by Eusebius, in the tenth book of his *Evangelical preparation*, makes mention of an author named Aretades, who composed an entire treatise on this sort of resemblances.—And St. Jerom relates, that his preceptor Donatus, explaining that sensible passage in Terence, “*Nihil est dictum quod non fit dictum prius,*” railed severely at the ancients, for taking from him his best thoughts; “*Pereant qui ante nos, nostra dixerunt.*” *

* Anti-Baillet, tom. ii. pag. 207.

MENAGE makes these observations on occasion of a passage in the Poetics of Vida, intended to justify borrowing the thoughts and even expressions of others, which passage is very applicable to the subject before us :

Aspice ut exuvias, veterumque insignia, nobis
Aptemus; rerum accipimus nunc clara reperta,
Nunc seriem atq; animum verborum, verba quoque ipsa;
Nec pudet interdum alterius nos ore locutos.*

Menage adds, that he intended to compile a regular treatise on the thefts and imitations of the poets. As his reading was very extensive, his work would probably have been very entertaining. For surely it is no trivial amusement, to trace an applauded sentiment or description to it's source, and to remark, with what † judgment and art it is adapted and inserted; provided this be done with such a spirit of modesty and candour, as evidently shews, the critic intends merely to gratify

* Lib. iii. v. 255.

† Dryden says prettily of Ben. Jonson's many imitations of the ancients, " You track him every where in their snow."

curiosity, and not to indulge envy, malignity, and a petulant desire of dethroning established * reputations. Thus for instance, says the Rambler, “ It can scarcely be doubted, that in the first of the following passages POPE remembered OVID, and that in the second † he copied CRASHAW, because there is a concurrence of more resemblances, than can be imagined to have happened by chance.

*Sæpe pater dixit, studium quid inutile tentas?
Mæonides nullas ipse reliquit opes —
Sponte suâ carmen numeros veniebat ad aptos,
Et quod conabar scribere, versus erat. OVID.*

*I left no calling for this idle trade,
No duty broke, no father disobey'd;
While yet a child, e'er yet a fool to fame,
I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came: POPE.*

— This plain floor,
Believe me reader, can say more

* See the fruitless and impudent attack of Lauder on Milton.

† The Works of Cardinal Bembo, and of Casa, of Annibal Caro, and Tasso himself, are full of entire lines taken from Dante and Petrarch.

Than

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Than many a braver marble can,
Here lies a truly honest man. CRASHAW.

This modest stone, what few vain marbles can,
May truly say, "here lies an honest man." POPE.*

Two other critics have also remarked some farther remarkable coincidences of POPE'S thought and expressions, with those of other writers, which are here inserted, as they cannot fail of entertaining the curious.

Pride, malice, folly, against Dryden rose
In various shapes of persons, critics, beaux. POPE.

L'ignorance, et l'erreur a ses naissantes peices†,
En habits de marquis, en robes de comtesses,
Venoient pour diffamer son chef-d-oeuvre nouveau.
BOILEAU.

Superior beings when of late they saw,
A mortal man unfold all nature's law;
Admir'd such wisdom in an earthly shape,
And shew'd a Newton as we shew an ape. POPE.

Simia cœlicolum risusque jocusque deorum est,
Tunc homo, quum temerè ingenio confidit, et audet
Abdita naturæ scrutari, arcanaque divum.
PALINGENIUS.

* Rambler, No. 143.

† Of Moliere.

— — — Happily to flee

From grave to gay, from lively to severe. POPE.

— — — D'une voix legere

Passer du grave au doux, du plaissant au severe.

BOILEAU.

The conclusion of the epitaph on Gay, where he observes, that his honour consists not in being entombed among kings and heroes,

But that the worthy and the good may say,
Striking their pensive bosoms, *here* lies GAY,

is adopted from an old Latin elegy on the death of prince Henry. This conceit of his friend's being enshrined in the hearts of the virtuous, is, by the way, one of the most forced and far-fetched, that POPE has fallen into*.

JONSON, as another critic has remarked, wrote an elegy on the lady Anne Pawlet, Marchioness of Winton; the beginning of which POPE seems to have thought of, when he wrote his verses, to the memory of an unfortunate lady. Jonson begins his elegy,

* The Adventurer, No. 63.

What

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What gentle ghost, besprent with April dew,
Hayles me so solemnly to yonder yew?
And beckoning woes me —— *

In which strain POPE beautifully breaks out,

What beck'ning ghost along the moonlight shade,
Invites my steps, and points to yonder glade?
'Tis she! ——

As Jonson now lies before me, I may perhaps be pardoned for pointing out another passage in him, which POPE probably remembered, when he wrote the following:

From shelves to shelves, see greedy Vulcan roll,
And lick up all their phyfic of the soul †;

Thus Jonson, speaking of a parcel of books,

These, hadst thou pleas'd either to dine or sup,
Had made a meale for Vulcan to lick up †.

I SHOULD be sensibly touched at the injurious imputation of so ungenerous, and indeed impotent a design, as that of attempting to

* In the Underwood: † Dunciad.

† See OBSERVATIONS on the FAIRIE QUEEN of Spencer, by Thomas Warton, sect. vii. p. 166.

diminish

diminish, or fully the reputation of so valuable a writer as POPE, by the most distant hint, or accusation of his being a plagiarist; a writer, to whom the English poetry, and the English language is everlastingly indebted. But we may say of his imitations, what his poetical father Dryden said of another, who deserved not such a panegyric so justly as our author: "HE INVADES AUTHORS LIKE A
 " MONARCH, AND WHAT WOULD BE THEFT
 " IN OTHER POETS, IS ONLY VICTORY IN
 " HIM*." For indeed he never works on the same subject with another, without heightening the piece with more masterly strokes, and a more artful pencil. And, as was observed of Augustus, what he finds merely coarse brick, he leaves magnificent marble. Those who flattered themselves, that they should diminish the reputation of Boileau, by printing, in the manner of a commentary at the bottom of each page of his works, the many lines he has borrowed from Horace and Juvenal, were grossly deceived. The verses of

* On Dram. poetry. p. 61.

the ancients, which this poet hath turned into French with so much address, and which he hath happily made so homogeneous, and of a piece with the rest of the work, that every thing seems to have been conceived in a continued train of thought, by the very same person, confer as much honour on M. Despreaux, as the verses which are purely his own. The original turn which he gives to his translations, * the boldness of his expressions, so little forced and unnatural, that they seem to be born, as it were, with his thoughts, display almost as much invention, as the first production of a thought entirely new. This induced La Bruyere to say, " que Despreaux paroïssoit creer les pensées

* Il y a du merite a faire un pareil larcin parcequ' 'on ne sçauroit le faire bien sans peine, et sans avoir du moins le talent de l' expression. Il faut autant d' industrie pour y réussir qu' il en falloit a Lacedemone, pour fair un larcin en galand homme. Ces pensées transplantées d' une langue dans un autre ne peuvent réussir que entre les mains de ceux qui du moins ont le don de l' invention des termes. Ainsi lorsqu' elles réussissent, la moitié de leur beauté appartient a celuy qui les a remises en oeuvre. Du Bos, Reflexions critiques. Section viii. vol. 2.

d' autrui."

“ d’ autrui.” Both he and POPE might have answered their * accusers, in the words with which Virgil is said to have replied, to those who accused him of borrowing all that was valuable in his *Æneid* from Homer; “ CUR NON ILLI QUOQUE EADEM FURTA TENTARENT? VERUM INTELLECTUROS, FACILIUS ESSE HERCULI CLAVUM, QUAM HOMERO VERSUM, SURRIPERE. †”

* The Jesuits that wrote the journals of Trevoux strongly object plagiarism to Boileau.

† Donat. In Vit. Virgil.

S E C T.

S E C T. III.

Of the ESSAY on Criticism.

WE are now arrived at a poem of that species, for which our author's genius was particularly turned, the DIDACTIC and the MORAL; it is therefore, as might be expected, a master-piece in its kind. I have been sometimes inclined to think, that the praises Addison has bestowed on it, were a little partial and invidious. "The observations, says he, follow one another, like those in Horace's Art of Poetry, without that methodical regularity which would have been requisite in a prose writer*." It is however certain, that the poem before us is by no means destitute of a just integrity, and a lucid order: each of the precepts and remarks naturally introduce the succeeding ones, so as to form an entire whole. The ingenious Mr. Hurd, hath also usefully shewn,

* *Spectator*, No. 253.

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that Horace observed a strict method, and unity of design, in his epistle to the Pisones, and that altho' the connexions are delicately fine and almost imperceptible, like the secret hinges of a well-wrought box, yet they artfully and closely unite each part together, and give coherence, uniformity, and beauty to the work. The Spectator adds; " The " observations in this essay are *some* of them " *uncommon*;" there is, I fear, a small mixture of ill-nature in these words; for this ESSAY, tho' on a beaten subject, abounds in many new remarks, and original rules, as well as in many happy and beautiful illustrations, and applications, of the old ones. We are indeed amazed to find such a knowledge of the world, such a maturity of judgment, and such a penetration into human nature, as are here displayed, in so very young a writer as was POPE, when he produced this ESSAY; for he was not twenty years old. Correctness and a just taste, are usually not attained but by long practice and experience in any art; but a clear head, and strong sense were the

the characteristical qualities of our author; and every man soonest displays his radical excellencies. If his predominant talent be warmth and vigor of imagination, it will break out in fanciful and luxuriant descriptions, the colouring of which will perhaps be too rich and glowing. If his chief force lies in the understanding rather than in the imagination, it will soon appear by solid and manly observations on life or learning, expressed in a more chaste and subdued style. The former will frequently be hurried into obscurity or turgidity, and a false grandeur of diction; the latter will seldom hazard a figure, whose usage is not already established, or an image beyond common life; will always be perspicuous if not elevated; will never disgust, if not transport, his readers; will avoid the grosser faults, if not arrive at the greater beauties of composition; The "eloquentiæ genus," for which he will be distinguished, will not be the "plenum et erectum, et audax, et præcelsum," but the "pressum, et mite,

et limatum*.” In the earliest letters of Pope to Wycherley, to Walsh, and Cromwell, we find many admirable and acute judgments of men and books, and an intimate acquaintance not only with some of the best Greek and Roman, particularly the latter, but the most celebrated of the French and Italian classics.

Du Bos † fixes the period of time, at which, generally speaking, the poets and the painters have arrived at as high a pitch of perfection, as their geniuses will permit, to be the age of thirty years, or a few years more or less. Virgil was near thirty when he composed his first Eclogue. Horace was a grown man when he began to be talked of at Rome as a poet, having been formerly engaged in a busy military life. Racine was about the same age when his *ANDROMACHE*, which may be regarded as his first good tragedy, was played. Corneille was more than thirty when his *CID* appeared. Despreaux was full thirty when he published his satires, such as

* Quintil. l. xi. c. 1.

† Sect. x. 2.

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we now have them. Moliere was full forty when he wrote the first of those comedies, on which his reputation is founded. But to excell in this species of composition, it was not sufficient for Moliere to be only a great poet; it was rather necessary for him to gain a thorough knowledge of men and the world, which is seldom attained so early in life; but without which, the best poet would be able to write but very indifferent comedies. Congreve however was but nineteen when he wrote his *Old Batchelor*. Raphaël was about thirty years old when he displayed the beauty and sublimity of his genius in the *Vatican*: for it is there we behold the first of his works, that are worthy the great name he at present so deservedly possesses. When Shakespear wrote his *LEAR*, Milton his *PARADISE LOST*, Spenser his *FAIRY QUEEN*, and Dryden his *MUSIC ODE*, they had all exceeded the middle age of man.

FROM this short review it appears, that few poets ripened so early as POPE; who
seems

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too mean and fordid, as well as too weak and inefficacious, to operate such an effect.

What crops of wit and honesty appear,
From spleen, from obstinacy, hate or fear !
See anger, zeal and fortitude supply,
Ev'n avarice, prudence ; sloth, philosophy ;
Nor virtue male or female can we name,
But what will grow on pride or grow on shame *.

It was another circumstance equally propitious to the studies of POPE, in this early part of his life, that he inherited a fortune that was a decent competence, and sufficient to supply the small expences, which both by constitution and reflection he required. He had no occasion to distract his thoughts by being sollicitous, “ de lodice paranda ;” he needed not to wait,

— Pour diner, le succes d'un sonnet †.

His father retired from business, at the revolution, to a little convenient box, at Binfield, near Oakingham, in Berkshire ‡ ; and having

* Essay on Man, ep. ii. v. 185. † Boileau, Art Poet. c. 4.

‡ See WORKS, vol. 4. 212.

converted

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 105

converted his effects into money, is said to have brought with him into the country almost twenty thousand pounds. As he was a papist he could not purchase, nor put his money to interest on real security; and as he adhered to the interests of King James, he made a point of conscience not to lend it to the new government;

For right hereditary tax'd and fin'd,
He stuck to poverty with peace of mind:

he therefore kept this sum in his chest, and lived upon the principal; till by that time his son came to the succession, a great part of it was consumed. There was however enough left to supply the occasions of our author, * and to

* He afterwards acquired a considerable fortune by his translation of the *Iliad*, which was published for his own benefit, by a subscription so large, that it does honour to this Kingdom. Mr. Warbarton informs us, that he sold it to Lintot the Bookseller, on the following terms; twelve hundred pounds paid down, and all the books for his subscribers. The *Odyssey* was published in the same manner, and sold on the same conditions, except only, that instead of twelve, he had but six hundred pounds. He was assisted in this latter work, by Broome and Fenton, to the first of whom he gave six hundred pounds, and to the latter, three hundred. This translation has proved a good estate to the bookseller.

P

keep

keep him from the two most destructive enemies to a young genius, want and dependence. " I can easily conceive, says a late moralist, that a mind occupied and overwhelmed with the weight and immensity of its own conceptions, *glancing* with astonishing rapidity *from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven*, cannot willingly submit to the dull drudgery, of examining the justness and accuracy of a butcher's bill. To descend from the widest and comprehensive views of nature, and weigh out hops for a brewing, must be invincibly disgusting to a true genius; to be able to build imaginary palaces of the most exquisite architecture, but yet not to pay a carpenter's bill, is a cutting mortification and disgrace *."

ON the other hand, opulence, and high station would be equally pernicious and unfavourable to a young genius; as they would almost unavoidably embarrass and immerse him, in the cares, the pleasures, the indo-

* The Adventurer, No. 50.

lence,

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lence, and the dissipation, that accompany abundance. And perhaps the fortune most truly desirable, and the situation most precisely proper for a young poet, are marked out in that celebrated saying of Charles the ninth of France; “*Equi et poetæ ALENDI sunt, non SAGINANDI.*”—Poets and horses are to be *fed* and not *fattened*.

THE ESSAY ON CRITICISM, which occasioned the introduction of these reflections, was first, I am well informed, written in prose, according to the precept of Vida, and the practice of Racine.

Quinetiam, prius effigiem formare, SOLUTIS,
Totiusque operis simulacrum fingere, verbis,
Proderit; atque omnes ex ordinenectere partes,
Et seriem rerum, et certos sibi ponere fines,
Per quos tuta regens vestigia tendere pergas*.

When Racine had fixed on a subject for a play, he wrote down in plain prose, not only the subject of each of the five acts, but of every scene and every speech; so that he

* Poetic. lib. i. ver. 75.

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could take a view of the whole at once, and see whether every part cohered, and cooperated to produce the intended event: when his matter was thus regularly disposed, he was used to say, “ My Tragedy is finished.”

I now propose to make some observations on, and illustrations of, such passages and precepts in this ESSAY, as, on account of their utility, novelty, or elegance, deserve particular attention; and perhaps I may take the freedom to hint at a few imperfections, in this SENSIBLE performance. I shall cite the passages in the natural order, in which they successively occur.

1. In poets as true genius is but rare*.

It is indeed so extremely rare, that no country in the succession of many ages has produced above three or four persons that deserve the title. The “ man of rhymes” may be easily found; but the genuine poet, of a lively plastic imagination, the true

* Ver. 11.

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 109

MAKER OF CREATOR, is so uncommon a prodigy, that one is almost tempted to subscribe to the opinion of Sir William Temple, where he says, " That of all the numbers of mankind, that live within the compass of a thousand years, for one man that is born capable of making a great poet, there may be a thousand born capable of making as great generals, or ministers of state, as the most renowned in story*." There are indeed more causes required to concur to the formation of the former, than of the latter; which necessarily render it's production more difficult,

2. True taste as seldom is the critic's share †.

LA BRUYERE says very sensibly, I will allow the good writers are scarce enough; but then, I ask, where are the people that know how to read?

3. Let such teach others who themselves excel,
And censure freely who have written well ‡.

* Miscell. Essay iv. part 2. † ver. 12. ‡ ver. 15.

It is somewhere remarked by Dryden, I think, that none but a poet is qualified to judge of a poet. The maxim is however contradicted by experience. Aristotle is said indeed to have written one ode ; but neither Boffu nor Hurd, are poets. The penetrating author of the Reflexions on Poetry, Painting, and Music, will for ever be read with delight, and with profit, by all ingenious artists; nevertheless, says Voltaire, he did not understand music, could never make verses, and was not possessed of a single picture ; but he had read, seen, heard, and reflected a great deal*. And Lord Shaftesbury speaks with some indignation on this subject; “ If a musician performs his part well in the hardest symphonies, he must necessarily know the notes, and understand the rules of harmony and music. But must a man, therefore, who has an ear, and has studied the rules of music, of necessity, have a voice or hand? Can no one possibly judge a *fiddle*, but who is himself a fiddle. ? Can no one judge a pic-

* Louis 14. p. 354.

ture,

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ture, but who is himself a layer of colours*?" Quintilian and Pliny, who speak of the works of the ancient painters and statuaries, with so much taste and sentiment, handled not themselves either the pencil or the chissel, nor Longinus and Dionysius the harp. But altho' such as have actually performed nothing in the art itself, may not on that account, be totally disqualified to judge with accuracy of any piece of workmanship, yet perhaps a judgment will come with more authority and force from an artist himself. Hence the connoisseurs highly prize the treatise of Rubens, concerning the imitation of antique statues, the Art of painting by Leonardo da Vinci, and the Lives of the painters by Vasari. As for the same reasons, Rameau's dissertation on the thorough bass, and the introduction to a good taste in music by the excellent, but neglected Geminiani, demand a particular regard. The prefaces of Dryden would be equally valuable, if he did not so frequently contradict himself, and

* Characteristics. V. 3. p. 190. Edit. 12mo.

advance

advance opinions diametrically opposite to each other. Some of Corneille's discourses on his own tragedies are admirably just. And one of the best pieces of modern criticism, the academy's observations on the *Cid*, was, we know, the work of persons who had themselves written well. And our author's own excellent preface to his translation of the *Illiad*, one of the best pieces of prose in the English language, is an example how well poets are qualified to be critics.

4. Some neither can for wits nor critics pass,
 As heavy mules are neither horse nor ass ;
 Those half-learn'd wittlings, numerous in our isle,
 As half-form'd insects on the banks of Nile ;
 Unfinish'd things, one knows not what to call,
 Their generation's so equivocal*.

THESE lines and those preceding, and following them, are excellently satirical; and were, I think, the first we find in his works, that give an indication of that species of poetry to which his talent was most powerfully bent, and in which, tho' not, as we shall see,

* Ver. 38.

in others, he excelled all mankind. The simile of the mule heightens the satire, and is new; as is the application of the insects of the Nile. POPE never shines so brightly as when he is proscribing bad authors.

5. — In the soul while MEMORY prevails,
The solid pow'r of UNDERSTANDING fails;
Where beams of bright IMAGINATION play,
The MEMORY's soft figures melt away*.

I HARDLY believe there is in any language a metaphor more appositely applied, or more elegantly expressed, than this of the effects of the warmth of fancy. Locke who has embellished his dry subject with a vast variety of pleasing similitudes and allusions, has a passage, relating to the retentiveness of the memory, so very like this before us, and so happily worded, that I cannot forbear giving the reader the pleasure of comparing them together; only premising, that these two passages are patterns of the manner in which the metaphor should be used, and of the method of preserving it unmixed with any other idea,

* Ver. 56.

and not continuing it too far. “ Our minds represent to us those tombs to which we are approaching; where though the brass and marble remain, yet the inscriptions are effaced by time, and the imagery moulders away. How much the constitution of our bodies are concerned in this, and whether the temper of the brain makes this difference, that in some, it retains the characters drawn on it like marble, in others like freestone, and in others little better than sand, I shall not here enquire; though it may seem probable that the constitution of the body does sometimes influence the memory; since we sometimes find a disease quite strip the mind of all it’s ideas; and the flames of a fever, in a few days, CALCINE all those images to dust and confusion, which seemed to be as lasting as if graved in marble*.”

WITH respect to the truth of this observation of POPE, experience abundantly evinceth, that the three great faculties of the soul

* Essay concerning Human Understanding, ch. x. sect. 5.

here

here spoken of are seldom found united in the same person. There have yet existed but a few transcendent geniuses, who have been singularly blest with this rare assemblage of different talents. All that I can at present recollect, who have at once enjoyed in full vigour, a sublime and splendid imagination, a solid and profound understanding, an exact and tenacious memory, are Herodotus, Plato, Tully, Livy, Tacitus, Galilæo, Bacon, Des Cartes, Locke, Malebranche, Milton, Burnet of the Charterhouse, Berkley and Montesquieu. Bacon, in his *Novum Organum*, divides the human genius into two sorts; "Men of dry distinct heads, cool imaginations, and keen application; they easily apprehend the differences of things, are masters in controversy, and excell in confutation; and these are the most common. The second sort are men of warm fancies, elevated thought, and wide knowledge: they instantly perceive the resemblances of things, and are poets or makers in science, invent arts, and strike out new light wherever they carry their

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views*.” This general observation has in it all that acuteness, comprehension, and knowledge of man, which so eminently distinguished this philosopher.

6. One science only will one genius fit ;
 So vast is art, so narrow human wit. —
 Not only bounded to peculiar arts,
 But oft in those confin'd to single parts †.

WHEN Tully attempted poetry, he became as ridiculous as Bolingbroke when he attempted philosophy and divinity. We look in vain for that genius which produced the Dissertation on Parties, in the tedious philosophical works; of which it is no exaggerated satire to say, that the reasoning of them is sophistical and inconclusive, the style diffuse and verbose, and the learning seemingly contained in them not drawn from the originals, but picked up and purloined from French critics and translations; and particularly from Bayle, from Rapin, and Thomassin, (as perhaps may be one day minutely

* Pag. 40.

† Ver. 60.

(shewn)

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(shewn) together with the assistances which our Cudworth and Stanley, happily afforded a writer confessedly ignorant of the Greek tongue, who has yet the insufferable * arrogance to vilify and censure, and to think he can confute, the best writers in that best language.

* I cannot forbear subjoining a passage of an excellent writer and accomplished scholar, which is so very apposite to the present purpose, that one would think the author had Bolingbroke in his eye, if his valuable work had not been published before the world was blessed with the First Philosophy. "He who pretends to discuss the Sentiments of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, or any one of the ancient philosophers, or even to cite and translate him, (except in trite and obvious sentiments) without accurately knowing the Greek tongue in general; the nice differences of many words apparently synonymous; the peculiar style of the author whom he presumes to handle; the new-coined words, and new significations given to old words, used by such author and his sect; the whole philosophy of such sect; together with the connections and dependencies of it's several parts, whether Logical, Ethical, or Physical; he, I say, that without this previous preparation, attempts what I have said, will shoot in the dark; will be liable to perpetual blunders; will explain, and praise, and censure, merely by chance; and though HE MAY POSSIBLY TO FOOLS APPEAR AS A WISE MAN, WILL CERTAINLY AMONG THE WISE EVER PASS FOR A FOOL. Such a man's intellect comprehends ancient philosophy, as his eye comprehends a distant prospect. He may see perhaps enough to know mountains from plains, and seas from woods; but for an accurate discernment of particulars and their character, this, without farther helps, 'tis impossible he should attain." HERMES, by HARRIS: book 2. chap. 3. pag. 270.

WHEN

WHEN Fontaine, whose tales indicated a truly comic genius, brought a comedy on the stage, it was received with a contempt equally unexpected and deserved. Terence has left us no tragedy; and the Mourning Bride of Congreve, notwithstanding the praises bestowed on it by POPE, in the Dunciad *, is certainly a despicable performance; the plot is unnaturally intricate, and overcharged with incidents, the sentiments trite, and the language turgid and bombast. Heemskirk and Teniers could not succeed in a serious and sublime subject of history-painting. The latter, it is well known, designed cartoons for tapestry, representing the history of the Turriani of Lombardy. Both the composition and the expression are extremely indifferent; and certain nicer virtuosi have remarked, that in the serious pieces of Titian himself, even in one of his Last Suppers, a circumstance of the Ridiculous and the Familiar is introduced, which suits not with

* B. iii. v. 310. In the notes.

the

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the dignity of his subject. * Hogarth's picture of Richard III. is pure and unmixed with any dissimilar and degrading circumstances, and strongly impresses terror and amazement. The modesty and good sense of the ancients is, in this particular, as in others, remarkable. The same writer never presumed to undertake more than one kind of dramatic poetry, if we except the CYCLOPS of Euripides. A poet never presumed to plead in public, or to write history, or indeed any considerable work in prose. The same actors never recited tragedy and comedy: this was observed long ago, by

* The author gladly lays hold of the opportunity of this SECOND EDITION of his work, to confess a mistake he had committed with respect to two admirable paintings of Mr. Hogarth, his PAUL PREACHING, and his INFANT MOSES; which, on a closer examination, are not chargeable with the blemishes imputed to them. Justice obliges him to declare the high opinion he entertains of the abilities of this inimitable artist, who shines in so many different lights, and on such very dissimilar subjects; and whose works have more of what the ancients called the *ἡθος* in them, than the compositions of any other Modern. For the rest, the author begs leave to add, that he is so far from being ashamed of retracting his error, that he had rather appear a MAN OF CANDOR, than the best CRITIC that ever lived.

Plato,

Plato, in the third book of his *REPUBLIC*. They seem to have held that diversity, nay universality, of excellence, at which the moderns frequently aim, to be a gift unattainable by man. We therefore of Great-Britain have perhaps more reason to congratulate ourselves, on two very singular phenomena; I mean, Shakespear's being able to pourtray characters so very different as *FALSTAFF*, and *MACBETH*; and Garrick's being able to personate so inimitably a *LEAR*, or an *ABEL DRUGGER*. Nothing can more fully demonstrate the extent and versatility of these two original geniuses. Corneille, whom the French are so fond of opposing to Shakespear, produced very contemptible comedies; and the *PLAIDEURS* of Racine is so close a resemblance of *Aristophanes*, that it ought not to be here urged. The most universal of authors seems to be *Voltaire*; who has written almost equally well, both in prose and verse; and whom either the tragedy of *MEROPE*, or the history of *LOUIS XIV*, would, alone, have immortalized.

7. Those rules of old, discover'd not devis'd,
 Are nature still, but nature methodiz'd;
 Nature, like liberty, is but restrain'd
 By the same laws which first herself ordain'd *.

THE precepts of the art of poesy, were posterior to practice; the rules of the Epopea were all drawn from the Iliad and the Odyssey; and of Tragedy, from the OEDIPUS of Sophocles. A petulant rejection, and an implicit veneration, of the rules of the ancient critics, are equally destructive of true taste. "It ought to be the first endeavour of a writer, says the excellent RAMBLER †, to distinguish nature from custom, or that which is established, because it is right, from that which is right only because it is established; that he may neither violate essential principles by a desire of novelty, nor debar himself from the attainment of any beauties within his view, by a needless fear of breaking rules, where no literary dictator had authority to prescribe." The same penetrating and judicious author, who always

* Ver. 88.

† No. 156.

thinks for himself, has also another passage too full of strong sense, and too apposite to the subject before us, to be here omitted.

“ CRITICISM, though dignified, from the earliest ages, by the labours of men eminent for knowledge and sagacity, and, since the revival of polite literature, the favourite study of European scholars, has not yet attained the certainty and stability of science. The rules that have been hitherto received, are seldom drawn from any settled principle, or self-evident postulate; nor are adapted to the natural and invariable constitution of things: but will be found upon examination, to be the arbitrary edicts of dictators exalted by their own authority, who out of many means by which the same end may be attained, selected those which happened to occur to their own reflection; and then by an edict, which idleness and timidity were willing to obey, prohibited any new experiments of wit, restrained fancy from the indulgence of her innate inclination to hazard and adventure, and
condemned

condemned all the future flights of genius, to pursue the path of the Mæonian eagle.

THE authority claimed by critics may be more justly opposed, as it is apparently derived from them whom they endeavour to controul; for we are indebted for a very small part of the rules of writing to the acuteness of those by whom they are delivered. The critics have generally no other merit, than that of having read the works of great authors with attention; they have observed the arrangement of their matter, and the graces of their expression; and then expect honour and reverence for precepts, which they never could have invented: so that practice has introduced rules, rather than rules have directed practice.

FOR this reason, the laws of every species of writing have been settled by the ideas of him by whom it was first raised to reputation; without much enquiry, whether his performances were not yet susceptible of improvement. The excellencies and the faults

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of celebrated writers have been equally recommended to posterity; and so far has blind reverence prevailed, that the NUMBER of their BOOKS has been thought worthy of imitation *."

THIS liberal and manly censure of critical bigotry, extends not to those fundamental and indispensable rules, which nature and necessity dictate, and demand to be observed; such for instance, as in the higher kinds of poetry, that the action of the epopea be one, great, and entire; that the hero be eminently distinguished, move our concern, and deeply interest us; that the episodes arise easily out of the main fable; that the action commence as near the catastrophe as possible: and, in the drama, that no more events be crowded together, than can be justly supposed to happen during the time of representation, or to be transacted on one individual spot, and the like. But the absurdity here animadverted on, is the scrupulous nicety of those, who bind themselves to obey frivolous and unim-

* No. 158.

portant

portant laws; such as, that an epic poem should consist not of less than twelve books; that it should end fortunately; that in the first book there should be no simile; that the exordium should be very simple and unadorned: that in a tragedy, only three personages should appear at once upon the stage; and that every tragedy should consist of five acts; by the rigid observation of which last unnecessary precept, the poet is deprived of using many a moving story, that would furnish matter enough for three perhaps, but not for five acts; with other rules, of the like indifferent nature. For the rest, as Voltaire observes, * whether the action of an epopea be simple or complex, completed in a month or in a year, or a longer time, whether the scene be fixed on one spot, as in the Iliad; or that the hero voyages from sea to sea, as in the Odyssey; whether he be furious like Achilles, or pious like Eneas; whether the action pass on land or sea; on the coast of Africa, as in the Lusiada of Camoens; in

* *Essay sur la poesie Epique*, pag. 339. tom. 1.

America, as in the Araucana of Alonzo D' Ercilla; in heaven, in hell, beyond the limits of our world, as in the Paradise Lost; all these circumstances are of no consequence: the poem will be for ever an Epic poem, an Heroic poem; at least, till another new title be found proportioned to its merit. If you scruple, says Addison, to give the title of an Epic poem to the Paradise Lost of Milton, call it, if you choose, a DIVINE poem, give it whatever name you please; provided you confess, that it is a work as admirable in its kind as the Iliad. "To dispute about titles is an unpardonable puerility."

8. Hear how learn'd Greece her useful rules indites,
When to repress, and when indulge our flights*.

IN the second part of Shaftesbury's ADVICE to an Author, is a judicious and elegant account of the rise and progress of arts and sciences, in ancient Greece; to subjects of which sort, it were to be wished this author

* Ver. 92.

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had always confined himself, as he indisputably understood them well, rather than have blemished and belied his patriotism, by writing against the religion of his country. I shall give the reader a passage that relates to the origin of criticism, which is curious and just. "When the persuasive arts, which were necessary to be cultivated among a people that were to be convinced before they acted, were grown thus in repute; and the power of moving the affections become the study and emulation of the forward wits and aspiring geniuses of the times; it would necessarily happen, that many geniuses of equal size and strength, though less covetous of public applause, of power, or of influence over mankind, would content themselves with the contemplation, merely, of these enchanting arts. These they would the better enjoy, the more they refined their taste, and cultivated their ear.—Hence was the origin of CRITICS; who, as arts and sciences advanced, would necessarily come withal into repute; and being heard with satisfaction in
their

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their turn, were at length tempted to become authors, and appear in public. These were honoured with the name of Sophists; a character which in early times was highly respected. Nor did the gravest philosophers, who were censors of manners, and critics of a higher degree, disdain to exert their criticism on the inferior arts; especially in those relating to speech, and the power of argument and persuasion. When such a race as this was once risen, 'twas no longer possible to impose on mankind, by what was specious and pretending. The public would be paid in no false wit, or jingling eloquence. Where the learned critics were so well received, and philosophers themselves disdained not to be of the number; there could not fail to arise critics of an inferior order, who would subdivide the several provinces of this empire *".

9. Know well each Ancient's proper character;
His fable, subject, scope, in every page;
Religion, country, genius of his age †.

* Characteristics, vol. I. 12mo. pag. 163. † Ver. 119.

FROM

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FROM their inattention to these particulars, many critics, and particularly the French, have been guilty of great absurdities. When Perrault impotently attempted to ridicule the first stanza of the first Olympic of Pindar, he was ignorant that the poet, in beginning with the praises of WATER *, alluded to the philosophy of Thales, who taught that water was the principle of all things; and which philosophy, Empedocles the Sicilian, a cotemporary of Pindar, and a subject of Hiero to whom Pindar wrote, had adopted in his beautiful poem. Homer and the Greek tragedians have been likewise censured, the former for protracting the Iliad after the death of Hector; and the latter, for continuing the AJAX and PHOENISSÆ, after the deaths of their respective heroes. But the censurers did not consider the importance of burial among the ancients; and that the action of the Iliad would have been imperfect without a description of the funeral rites of Hector and Patroclus: as the two tragedies, without those of Polynices and

* Ἀγιστὸν μὲν ΤΑΨΡ.

S

Eteocles:

Eteocles : for the ancients esteemed a deprivation of sepulture to be a more severe calamity than death itself. It is observable that this circumstance did not occur to POPE *, when he endeavoured to justify this conduct of Homer, by only saying, that as the anger of Achilles does not die with Hector, but persecutes his very remains, the poet still keeps up to his subject by describing the many effects of his anger, 'till it is fully satisfied : and that for this reason, the two last books of the Iliad may be thought not to be excrescencies, but essential to the poem. I will only add, that I do not know an author whose capital excellence suffers more from the reader's not regarding his climate and country, than the incomparable Cervantes. There is a striking propriety in the madness of Don Quixote, not frequently taken notice of ; for Thuanus informs us, that MADNESS is a common disorder among the Spaniards at the latter part of life, about the age of which the knight is represented. “ Sur la

* Iliad xxiii. Note 1.

fin de ses jours Mendozza devint furieux, comme font d'ordinaire les Espagnols *."

10. Still with itself compar'd, his text peruse,
And let your comment be the Mantuan Muse †.

ALTHOUGH perhaps it may seem impossible to produce any new observations on Homer and Virgil, after so many volumes of criticism as have been spent upon them, yet the following remarks have a novelty and penetration in them that may entertain; especially, as the treatise from which they are taken is extremely scarce. "*Quæ variæ inter se notæ atque imagines animorum, a principibus utriusque populi poetis, Homero et Virgilio, mirificè exprimuntur. Siquidem Homeri duces et reges rapacitate, libidine, atque anilibus questibus, lacrymisque puerilibus, Græcam levitatem et inconstantiam referunt. Virgiliani vero principes, ab eximio poeta, qui Romanæ severitatis fastidium, et Latinum supercilium verebatur, et ad heroum*

* Perroniana et Thuana, a Cologne, 1695, pag. 431.

† Ver. 128.

populum loquebatur, ita componuntur ad majestatem consularem, ut quamvis ab Asiatica mollitie luxuque venerint, inter Furios atque Claudios nati educatique videantur; Neque suam, ullo actu, Æneas originem prodidisset, nisi, a præfractiore aliquanto pietate, fudisset crebro copiam lacrymarum.—Qua meliorum expressione morum hac ætate, non modo Virgilius Latinorum poetarum princeps, sed quivis inflatissimus vernaculorum, Homero præfertur: cum hic animos proceribus induerit suos, ille vero alienos.—Quamobrem varietas morum, qui carmine reddebantur, et hominum ad quos ea dirigebantur, inter Latinam Græcamque poesin, non inventionis tantum attulit, sed et elocutionis discrimen illud, quod præcipue inter Homerum et Virgiliumprehenditur; cum sententias et ornamenta quæ Homerus sparserat, Virgilius, Romanorum aurium causa, contraxerit; atque ad mores et ingenia retulerit eorum, qui a poetis non petebant publicam aut privatam institutionem, quam ipsi Marte suo invenerant; sed tantum delectationem.”

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tionem *.” Blackwell, in his Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer, has taken many observations from this valuable book, particularly in his twelfth Section.

11. Some beauties yet no precepts can declare,
For there's a happiness, as well as care.
Music resembles poetry ; in each
Are nameless graces, which no methods teach,
And which a master-hand alone can reach †.

POPE in this passage seems to have remembered one of the Essays of Bacon, of which he is known to have been remarkably fond. “ There is no excellent beauty, that hath not some strangeness in the proportion. A man cannot tell whether Apelles or Albert Durer, were the more trifler : whereof the one would make a personage by geometrical proportions ; the other by taking the best parts out of divers faces, to make one excellent. Such personages, I think, would

* J. Vincentii Gravinae de POESI, ad S. Maffeiū EPIST. Added to his treatise entitled, Della Ragion Poetica. In Napoli. 1716, pag. 239, 250.

† Ver. 141.

please

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please nobody, but the painter that made them. Not but I think, a painter may make a better face than ever was; but he must do it, by a kind of felicity, as a musician that maketh an excellent ayre in music, and not by rule. A man shall see faces, that if you examine them, part by part, you shall find never a good one; and yet altogether doe well *".

12. Thus Pegafus, a nearer way to take,
 May boldly deviate from the common track;
 From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
 And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,
 Which, without passing thro' the judgment, gains
 The heart, and all it's ends at once obtains †.

HERE is evidently a blameable mixture of metaphors; where the attributes of the horse and the writer are confounded. The former may justly be said to "take a nearer way, and, to deviate from a track;" but how can a *horse* "snatch a grace," or "gain the heart?"

* Essay xliii. On BEAUTY.

† Ver. 150.

13. Some

13. Some figures monstrous and mishap'd appear,
 Consider'd singly, or beheld too near,
 Which, but proportion'd to their light, or place,
 Due distance reconciles to time and place *.

By this excellent observation, delivered in a beautiful metaphor, all the faults imputed to Homer may be justified. Those who censure what is called the GROSSNESS of some of his images, may please to attend to the following remark of a writer, by no means prejudiced in favour of the ancients. “ Quant a ce qu’ on appelle GROSSIERETE dans les héros d’ Homère, on peut rire tant qu’ on voudra de voir Patrocle, au neuvième livre de l’ Iliade, mettre trois gigots de mouton dans une marmite, allumer et souffler le feu, et préparer le diner avec Achille: Achille et Patrocle n’ en font pas moins éclatans. Charles XII. Roi de Suède, a fait six mois sa cuisine a Demir-Tocca, sans perdre rien de son heroïsme ; et la plupart de nos généraux qui portent dans une campe tout le luxe d’ une cour effeminee, auront bien de la peine

* Ver. 171.

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a egaler ces heros, qui faisoient leur cuisine eux-memes. — En un mot, Homere avoit a representer un Ajax et un Hector; non un courtisan de Versailles, ou de Saint James *.”

13. A prudent chief not always must display
His pow'rs in equal rank, and fair array †.

THE same may be said of music: concerning which, a discerning judge has lately made the following observation. “ I do not mean to affirm, that in this extensive work [of Marcello] every recitative, air, or chorus, is of equal excellence. A continued elevation of this kind no author ever came up to. Nay, if we consider that variety, which in all arts is necessary to keep up attention, we may perhaps affirm with truth, that **INEQUALITY** makes a part of the character of excellence: that something ought to be thrown into shades, in order to make the lights more

* Voltaire, *Essay sur la Poësie Epique*. Les Oeuvres. Tom. ii. pag. 354, 355. This Essay is very different from what formerly appeared in England;

† Ver. 175.

striking.

striking. And, in this respect, Marcello is truly excellent: if ever he seems to FALL, it is only to RISE with more astonishing majesty and greatness *.” It may be pertinent to subjoin Roscommon’s remark on the same subject,

— — — — — Far the greatest part
Of what some call neglect, is study’d art.
When Virgil seems to trifle in a line,
’Tis but a warning piece, which gives the sign
To wake your fancy, and prepare your fight
To reach the noble height of some unusual flight †.

14. Hail bards triumphant born in happier days ‡.

DOCTOR Warburton is of opinion, that “there is a *pleasantry* in this title, which alludes to the state of WARFARE, that all true genius must undergo while here on earth.” Is not this interpretation of the word *triumphant* very far-fetched, and foreign to the author’s meaning? Who, I conceive, used the word, to denote merely the TRIUMPH, which arose from *superiority*.

* Avifon’s Essay on Musical Expression, edit. ii. pag. 103.

† Essay on Transl. Verse.

‡ Ver. 189.

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15. The *last*, the meanest of your sons inspire *.

“ THIS word *last*, says the same commentator, spoken in his early youth, as it were by chance, seems to have been OMINOUS.” I am not persuaded that all true genius died with POPE: for one would be tempted to think, that the Seasons of Thomson, and Pleasures of Imagination, and the Odes of Akenfide, the Night-thoughts of Young, the Leonidas of Glover, the Elegy of Gray, and Ode on Eton College, the truly pathetic Monody on lady Lyttleton, together with many Pieces in Doddsley’s Miscellanies, were not published when Dr. Warburton delivered this insinuation of a failure of poetical abilities.

16. So pleas’d at first the towring Alps we try,
Mount o’er the vales, and seem to tread the sky,
Th’ eternal snows appear already past,
And the first clouds and mountains seem the last :
But, those attain’d, we tremble to survey
The growing labours of the lengthen’d way ;
Th’ increasing prospect tires our wandring eyes,
Hills peep o’er hills, and Alps on Alps arise †.

* Ver. 196.

† Ver. 225.

THIS

THIS comparison is frequently mentioned, as an instance of the strength of fancy. The images however appear too general and indistinct, and the last line conveys no new idea to the mind. The following picture in Shaftesbury, on the same sort of subject, appears to be more full and striking. " Beneath the mountain's foot, the rocky country rises into hills, a proper basis of the ponderous mass above: where huge embodied rocks lie piled on one another, and seem to prop the high arch of heaven. See! with what trembling steps poor mankind tread the narrow brink of the deep precipices! From whence with giddy horror they look down, mistrusting even the ground that bears them; whilst they hear the hollow sound of torrents underneath, and see the ruin of the impending rock; with falling trees, which hang with their roots upwards, and seem to draw more ruin after them *". See Livy's picturesque description of Annibal passing the Alps.

* *The MORALISTS. Characteristics, vol. ii. pag. 253:*

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17. A perfect judge will read each word of wit,
 With the same spirit, that it's author writ *.

To be able to judge of poetry, says Voltaire, a man must feel strongly, must be born with some sparks of that fire, which animates the poet whom he criticises. As in deciding upon the merit of a piece of music, it is not enough, it is indeed nothing, to calculate the proportion of sounds as a mathematician, but we must have an ear and a soul for music †.

18. Thus when we view some well-proportion'd dome,
 (The world's just wonder, and ev'n thine, O Rome!)
 No single parts unequally surprise,
 All comes united to th' admiring eyes;
 No monstrous height, or breadth, or length appear,
 The Whole at once is bold, and regular ‡.

THIS is justly and elegantly expressed; and though it may seem difficult to speak of the same subject after such a description, yet Akenfide has ventured, and nobly succeeded.

* Ver. 233 † Ubi supra, pag. 361. ‡ Ver. 247.

Mark,

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Mark, how the dread PANTHEON stands,
Amid the domes of modern hands!
Amid the toys of idle state,
How simply, how severely great!
Then pause! * — — —

19. Once on a time, La Mancha's knight, they say,
A certain bard encountering on the way †. —

By this short tale POPE has shewed us, how much he could have excelled in telling a story of humour. The incident is taken from the second part of Don Quixote, first written by Don Alonzo Fernandez de Avellanada, and afterwards translated, or rather imitated and new-modelled, by no less an author than the celebrated Le Sage ‡. The book is not so contemptible as some authors insinuate; it was well received in France,

* Ode to L. Huntington.

† Ver. 267.

‡ Le Sage generally took his plans from the Spanish writers, the manners of which nation he has well imitated. Le Diable Boiteux was drawn from the Diabolo Cojuelo of Guevara; his Gil Blas from Don Gusman D'Alfarache. Le Sage made a journey into Spain to acquaint himself with the Spanish customs. He is a natural writer, of true humour. He died in a little house near Paris, where he supported himself by writing, 1747. He had been deaf ten years.

and

and abounds in many strokes of humour and character worthy Cervantes himself. The brevity to which POPE's narration was confined, would not permit him to insert the following humorous dialogue at length. " I am satisfied you'll compass your design, said the scholar, provided you omit the combat in the lists. Let him have a care of that, said Don Quixote interrupting him, that is the best part of the plot. But Sir, quoth the Bachelor, if you would have me adhere to Aristotle's rules, I must omit the combat. Aristotle, replied the Knight, I grant was a man of some parts; but his capacity was not unbounded: and give me leave to tell you, his authority does not extend over combats in the list, which are far above his narrow rules. Would you suffer the chaste Queen of Bohemia to perish? For how can you clear her innocence? Believe me, COMBAT is the most honourable method you can pursue; and, besides, it will add such grace to your play, that all the rules in the universe must not stand in competition with it. Well, Sir Knight,

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Knight, replied the Bachelor, for your sake, and for the honour of chivalry, I will not leave out the combat: and that it may appear the more glorious, all the court of Bohemia shall be present at it, from the princes of the blood, to the very footmen. But still one difficulty remains, which is, that our common theatres are not large enough for it. There must be one erected on purpose, answered the Knight; and in a word, rather than leave out the combat, the play had better be acted in a field or plain *."

20. Some to *conceit* alone their taste confine †,
And glitt'ring thoughts struck out at every line.

SIMPLICITY, with elegance and propriety, is the perfection of style in every composition. Let us, on this occasion, compare two passages from Theocritus and Ovid upon the same subject. The Cyclops, in the former, addresses Galatea with comparisons, natural, obvious, and drawn from his situation.

* Continuation of Hist. of Don Quixote, b. iii. ch. 10.

† Ver. 289.

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Ω λευκα Γαλατεια, τι τοι φιλοῖ ἀποβάλλη ;
 Λευκοτέρα πακίας πόλιδι, απαλωτέρα δ' ἀγροῦ,*
 Μοσχῷ γαυροτέρα, φιαρῶνι ομφακῷ ὡμας*.

These simple and pastoral images were the most proper that could occur to a Cyclops, and to an inhabitant of Sicily. Ovid could not restrain the luxuriancy of his genius, on the same occasion, from wandering into an endless variety of flowery and unappropriated similitudes, and equally applicable to any other person or place.

Candidior nivei folio, Galatea, ligustri ;
 Floridior pratis ; longâ procerior alno ;
 Splendidior vitro ; tenero lascivior hædo ;
 Lævior assiduo detritis æquore conchis ;
 Solibus hybernis, æstivâ gratior umbrâ ;
 Nobilior pomis ; platano conspectior altâ ;
 Lucidior glacie ; maturâ dulcior uvâ ;
 Mollior et cygni plumis, et lacte coacto ;
 Et, si non fugias, riguo formosior horto †.

There are seven more lines of comparison,

12. False eloquence, like the prismatic glass,
 It's gaudy colours spreads on every place:
 The face of nature we no more survey,
 All glares alike without distinction gay †.

* Idyll. Κυκλ. † Metam. 13. 789. ‡ Ver. 311.

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THE nauseous affectation of expressing every thing pompously and poetically, is no where more visible, than in a poem lately published, entitled AMYNTOR and THEODORA. The following instance may be alleged among many others. Amyntor having a pathetic tale to discover, being choaked with sorrow and at a loss for utterance, uses these ornamental and unnatural images.

— — — — — O could I steal
From Harmony her softest warbled strain
Of melting air ! or Zephyre's vernal voice !
Or Philomela's song, when love dissolves
To liquid blandishment his evening lay,
All nature smiling round *.

Voltaire has given a comprehensive rule with respect to every species of composition, " Il ne faut rechercher, ni les pensées, ni les tours, ni les expressions, et que l'art, dans tous les grands ouvrages, est de bien raisonner, sans trop faire d'argument ; de bien peindre, sans vouloir tout peindre ; d'émouvoir, sans vouloir toujours exciter les passions †."

* Cant. iii. ver. 92.

† Oeuvres, tom. iii. pag. 332.

U

22. Some

22. Some by old words to fame have made pretence *.

QUINTILIAN's advice on this subject is as follows. "Cum sint autem verba propria, ficta, translata; propriis dignitatem dat antiquitas. Namque et sanctiorem, et magis admirabilem reddunt orationem, quibus non quilibet fuit usus: eoque ornamento acerrimi iudicii Virgilius unice est usus. *Olli* enim, et *quianam*, et *mis*, et *pone*, pellucet, et aspergunt illam, quæ etiam in picturis est gratissima, vetustatis inimitabilem arti auctoritatem. Sed utendum modo, nec ex ultimis tenebris repetenda †."

23. Where'er you find the cooling western breeze,
In the next line it whispers through the trees ‡

TRITE and unvaried rhymes offend us, not only as they are destitute of the grace of novelty, but as they imply carelessness in the poet, who adopts what he finds ready made to his hands. We have not many compositions where NEW and uncommon rhymes are introduced. One or two writers however I cannot forbear mentioning,

* Ver. 324. † Inst. Orat. lib. vii. c. 3. ‡ Ver. 350.

who

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who have been studious of this beauty. They are Parnelle, Pitt in his Translations from Vida, West in his Pindar, Thomson in the Castle of Indolence, and the author of an elegant Ode TO SUMMER, published in a Miscellany entitled the UNION*.

24. A needless Alexandrine ends the song †.

DRYDEN was the first who introduced the frequent use of this measure into our English heroic, for we do not ever find it even in the longer works of Sandys, nor in Waller. Dryden has often used it very happily, and it gives a complete harmony to many of his triplets. By scrupulously avoiding it, POPE has fallen into an unpleasing and tiresome monotony in his Iliad.

25. And praise the easy vigour of a line,

Where Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness joint‡.

FENTON, in his entertaining observations on Waller, has given us a curious anecdote concerning the great industry and exactness

* Edinburgh, 1753, 12mo. p. 81. † Ver. 356. ‡ Ver. 366.

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with which Waller polished even his smallest compositions. "When the court was at Windsor, these verses * were writ in the Tasso of her Royal Highness, at Mr. Waller's request, by the late Duke of Buckinghamshire; and I very well remember to have heard his Grace say, that the author employed the GREATEST PART OF A SUMMER, in composing, and correcting them. So that however he is generally reputed the parent of those swarms of insect wits, who affect to be thought easy writers, it is evident that he bestowed much time and care on his poems, before he ventured them out of his hands †."

26. True ease in writing comes from art not chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance §.

IT is well known, that the writings of Voiture, of Saraffin, and Fontaine, cost them much pains, and were laboured into that facility for which they are so famous, with re-

* Only ten in number.

† Fenton's Waller, edit. 12mo. OBSERVATIONS, pag. 148.

§ Ver. 362.

peated alterations, and many rasures. Moliere is reported to have past whole days in fixing upon a proper epithet or rhyme, altho' his verses have all the flow and freedom of conversation. This happy facility, said a man of wit, may be compared to garden-terraces; the expence of which does not appear: and which, after the cost of several millions, yet seem to be a mere work of chance and nature. I have been informed, that Addison was so extremely nice in polishing his prose compositions, that, when almost a whole impression of a Spectator was worked off, he would stop the press, to insert a new preposition or conjunction.

27. Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,
 And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;
 But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
 The hoarse rough verse should like the torrent roar;
 When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
 The line too labours, and the words move slow;
 Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,
 Flies o'er th'unbending corn, and skims along the main*.

* Ver. 367.

THESE

THESE lines are usually cited as fine examples of adapting the sound to the sense. But that POPE has failed in this endeavour, has been lately demonstrated by the RAMBLER. "The verse intended to represent the *whisper* of the *vernal breeze* must surely be confessed not much to excel in softness or volubility; and the *smooth stream* runs with a perpetual clash of jarring consonants. The noise and turbulence of the *torrent*, is indeed, distinctly imaged; for it requires very little skill to make our language rough. But in the lines which mention the *effort of Ajax*, there is no particular heaviness or delay. The *swiftness of Camilla* is rather contrasted than exemplified. Why the verse should be lengthened to express speed, will not easily be discovered. In the dactyls, used for that purpose by the ancients, two short syllables were pronounced with such rapidity, as to be equal only to one long; they therefore naturally exhibit the act of passing through a long space in a short time. But the *Alexandrine*, by its pause in the midst, is a tardy
and

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and stately measure; and the word *unbending*, one of the most sluggish and slow which our language affords, cannot much accelerate its motion *”

28. Be thou the first true merit to befriend,
His praise is lost, who stays till all commend†.

WHEN Thomson published his *WINTER*, it lay a long time neglected, 'till Mr. Spense made honourable mention of it in his *Essay on the Odyssey*; which becoming a popular book, made the poem universally known. Thomson always acknowledged the use of this recommendation; and from this circumstance, an intimacy commenced between the critic and the poet, which lasted 'till the lamented death of the latter, who was of a most amiable and benevolent temper.

29. And such as Chaucer is shall Dryden be ‡.

WALLER has an elegant copy of verses on the mutability of the English tongue, which bears a strong resemblance to this passage of POPE.

* No. 92.

† Ver. 474.

‡ Ver. 483.

Poets that lasting marble seek,
 Must carve in Latin or in Greek ;
 We write in sand ; our language grows,
 And like the tide, our work o'erflows.
 Chaucer his SENSE can only boast,
 The glory of his numbers lost !
 Years have defac'd his matchless strain,
 And yet HE DID NOT SING IN VAIN *.

To fix a language has been found, among the most able undertakers, to be a fruitless project. The style of the present French Novels and Memoirs, for the French at present produce little besides, is visibly different from that of Boileau and Bossuet, notwithstanding the strict and seasonable injunctions of the Academy: and the diction, even of such a writer as Maffei, is corrupted with many words, not to be found in Machiavel or Ariosto.

30. So when the faithful pencil has design'd
 Some bright idea of the master's mind,
 When a new world leaps out at his command,
 And ready nature waits upon his hand ;
 When the ripe colours soften and unite,
 And sweetly melt into just shade and light ;

* OF ENGLISH VERSE. Fenton's edit. pag. 147. 12mo.
 When

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When mellowing years their full perfection give,
And each bold figure just begins to live,
The treacherous colours the fair art betray,
And all the bright creation fades away *.

I HAVE quoted these beautiful lines at length, as I believe nothing was ever so happily expressed on the art of painting: a subject of which POPE always speaks *con amore*. Of all poets whatever, Milton has spoken most feelingly of music, and POPE of painting. The reader may however compare the following passage of Dryden, on the same subject.

More cannot be by mortal art express'd,
But venerable age shall add the rest :
For Time shall with his ready pencil stand,
Retouch your figures with his ripening hand ;
Mellow your colours, and imbrown the tint,
Add ev'ry grace, which Time alone can grant ;
To future ages shall your fame convey,
And give more beauties than he takes away †.

IF POPE has so much excelled in speaking in the properest terms of this art, it may per-

* Ver. 484.

† Dryden to Kneller.

haps be ascribed to his having practised it; the same may be said of Milton, with respect to music. It may perhaps be wondered at, that a proficiency in these arts is not now frequently found in the same person. I cannot at present recollect any painters that were good poets; except Salvator Rosa, and Charles Vermander of Mulbrac in Flanders, whose comedies are much esteemed. But the satires of the former contain no strokes of that fervid and wild imagination, so visible in his landscapes.

31. If wit so much from ign'rance undergo *.

THE inconveniences that attend wit are well enumerated in this excellent passage. Poets, who imagine they are known and admired, are frequently mortified and humbled. Boileau going one day to receive his pension, and the treasurer reading these words in his Order; "The pension we have granted to Boileau, on account of the satisfaction *his works* have given us," asked him of what

* Ver. 508.

kind

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kind were *his works*: “ Of *Masonry*, replied the poet, I am a BUILDER.” Racine always reckoned the praises of the ignorant among the chief sources of chagrin: and used to relate, that an old magistrate, who had never been at a play, was carried, one day, to his *Andromaque*. This magistrate was very attentive to the tragedy, to which was added the *Plaideurs*; and going out of the theatre, he said to the author, “ I am extremely pleased, Sir, with your *Andromaque*, I am only amazed that it ends so *gaily*; J’avois d’abord eu quelque envie de pleurer, mais la vue des petits chiens m’a fait rire.”

32. Now they who reach Parnassus’ lofty crown,
Employ their pains to spurn some others down *.

If we consider the arts used by Addison to suppress the rising merit of POPE, which are now fully laid open, it gives one pain to reflect, to what mean artifices, envy and malignity will compel a gentleman and a genius, to descend. It is certain, that Addison dis-

* Ver. 514.

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couraged POPE from inserting the machinery in the Rape of the Lock: that he privately insinuated that POPE was a Tory and a Jacobite; and had a hand in writing the Examiners: that Addison himself translated the first book of Homer, published under Tickel's name: and that he secretly encouraged Gildon to abuse POPE in a virulent pamphlet, for which Addison paid Gildon ten guineas. This usage extorted from POPE the famous character of Atticus, which is perhaps the finest piece of satire extant. It is said, that when Racine read his tragedy of Alexander to Corneille, the latter gave him many general commendations, but advised him to apply his genius, as not being adapted to the drama, to some other species of poetry. Corneille, one would hope, was incapable of a mean jealousy, and if he gave this advice, thought it really proper to be given.

33. When love was all an easy monarch's care
Seldom at council, never in a war *.

* Ver. 537.

THE

THE dissolute reign of Charles II. justly deserved the satirical proscription in this passage. Under the notion of laughing at the absurd austerities of the Puritans, it became the mode to run into the contrary extreme, and to ridicule real religion and unaffected virtue. The king, during his exile, had seen and admired the splendor of the court of Louis XIV. and endeavoured to introduce the same luxury into the English court. The common opinion, that this was the Augustan age in England, is excessively false. A just taste was by no means yet formed. What was called SHEER WIT, was alone studied and applauded. Rochester, it is said, had no idea that there could be a better poet than Cowley. The King was perpetually quoting HUDIBRAS. The neglect of such a poem as the Paradise Lost, will for ever remain a monument of the bad taste that prevailed. It may be added, that the progress of philological learning, and of what is called the belles lettres, was perhaps obstructed by the institution of the Royal Society; which turned the

the thoughts of men of genius to physical enquiries. Our style in prose was but beginning to be polished: although the diction of Hobbes is sufficiently pure; which philosopher, and not the FLORID Spratt, was the classic of that age. If I was to name a time, when the arts and polite literature, were at their height in this nation, I should mention the latter end of King William, and the reign of Queen Anne.

34. With mean complacence ne'er betray your trust,
Nor be so civil as to prove unjust *.

OUR poet practised this excellent precept, in his conduct towards Wycherley; whose pieces he corrected, with equal freedom and judgment. But Wycherley, who had a bad heart, and an insufferable share of vanity, and who was one of the professed WITS of the last-mentioned age, was soon disgusted at this candour and ingenuity of POPE; in-somuch, that he came to an open and ungenerous rupture with him.

* Ver. 581.

35. Fear not the anger of the wife to raise;
 Those best can bear reproof who merit praise. †

THE freedom and unreservedness, with which Boileau and Racine communicated their works to each other, is hardly to be paralleled: of which many amiable instances appear in their letters, lately published by the son of the latter: particularly in the following. “ J’ai trouvé que la TROMPETTE & LES SOURDS étoient trop joues, & qu’ il ne falloit point trop appuyer sur votre incommodité, moins encore chercher de l’ esprit sur ce sujet *.” Boileau communicated to his friend the first sketch of his Ode on the Taking Namur. It is entertaining to contemplate a rude draught by such a master; and is no less pleasing to observe the temper, with which he receives the objections of Racine. ‡ “ J’ai déjà retouché a tout cela; mais je ne veux point l’ achever que je n’ aie reçu vos remarques, qui sûrement m’ éclaireront encore l’ esprit.” The same volume informs us of

† Ver. 583. ‡ Pag. 197. See also pag. 245. 191.

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a curious anecdote, that Boileau generally made the second verse of a couplet before the first; that he declared it was one of the grand secrets of poetry to give, by this means, a greater energy and meaning to his verses; that he advised Racine to follow the same method, and said on this occasion, “ I have taught him to rhyme *difficilement*.”

36. No place so sacred from such fops is barr'd,
Nor is Paul's church more safe than Paul's church-yard;
Nay, fly to altars; there they'll talk you dead:
For fools rush in where angels fear to tread. *

THIS stroke of satire is literally taken from Boileau.

Gardez-vous d'imiter ce rimeur furieux,
Qui de ses vains écrits lecteur harmonieux
Aborde en récitant quiconque le salue,
Et poursuit de ses vers les passans dans la rue,
Il n'est Temple si saint des Anges respecté,
Qui soit contre sa muse un lieu du sûreté. †

Which lines allude to the impertinence of a French poet, called Du Perrier; who, finding

* Ver. 622. † Art. Poet. Chant. iv.

Boileau

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Boileau one day at church, insisted upon repeating to him an ode, during the elevation of the host; and desired his opinion, whether or no it was in the manner of Malherbe. Without this anecdote, the pleasantry of the satire would be overlooked. It may here be occasionally observed, how many beauties in this species of writing are lost, for want of knowing the facts to which they allude. The following passage may be produced as a proof. Boileau, in his excellent Epistle to his Gardener at Anteuil, says,

Mon maitre, dirois-tu, passe pour un Docteur,
Et parle quelquefois mieux qu' un Predicateur †,

It seems our * author and Racine returned one day in high spirits from Versailles, with two honest citizens of Paris. As their conversation

* The names of Racine, and Corneille, being often mentioned in this work, it will not be improper to add an ingenious Parallel of their respective merits, written by Fontenelle.

I. Corneille had no excellent author before his eyes, whom he could follow : Racine had Corneille.

† Epitre 11.

X

II. Corneille

versation was full of gaiety and humour, the two citizens were vastly delighted : and one of them, at parting, stopt Boileau with this compliment, “ I have travelled with Doctors of the Sorbonne, and even with Religious ; but I never heard so many fine things said before ; *en verite vous parlez cent fois mieux qu’ un PREDICATEUR.*”

IT

II. Corneille found the French stage in a barbarous state, and advanced it to great Perfection : Racine has not supported it in the perfection in which he found it.

III. The characters of Corneille are true, though they are not common : The characters of Racine are not true, but only so far forth as they are common.

IV. Sometimes the characters of Corneille, are, in some respects, false and unnatural, in that they are noble and singular : Those of Racine are often, in some respects, low, on account of their being natural and ordinary.

V. He that has a noble heart would chuse to resemble the heroes of Corneille : He that has a little heart is pleased to find his own resemblance in the heroes of Racine.

VI. We carry, from hearing the pieces of the One, a desire to be virtuous : And we carry the pleasure of finding men like ourselves in foibles and weaknesses, from the pieces of the Other.

VII. The

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It is but justice to add, that the fourteen succeeding verses in the poem before us, containing the character of a TRUE CRITIC, are superior to any thing in Boileau's Art of Poetry :

VII. The Tender and the Graceful of Racine is sometimes to be found in Corneille: The Grand and Sublime of Corneille is never to be found in Racine.

VIII. Racine has painted only the French and the present age, even when he designed to paint another age, and other nations: We see in Corneille, all those ages and all those nations, that he intended to paint.

IX. The number of the pieces of Corneille is much greater than that of Racine: Corneille, notwithstanding, has made fewer tautologies and repetitions than Racine has made.

X. In the passages where the versification of Corneille is good, it is more bold, more noble, and, at the same time, as pure and as finished as that of Racine; but it is not preserved in this degree of beauty; and that of Racine is always equally supported.

XI. Authors inferior to Racine have written successfully after him, in his own way: No author, not even Racine himself, dared to attempt, after Corneille, that kind of writing which was peculiar to him.

This comparison, of the justice of which the reader is left to judge, is said greatly to have irritated Boileau, the invariable friend and defender of Racine. It may be remarked, that Boileau had mentioned Fontenelle with contempt, in a stanza

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Poetry: from which, however, POPE has borrowed many observations.

37. The mighty STAGYRITE first left the shore,
Spread all his sails, and durst the deep explore.
He steer'd securely, and discover'd far,
Led by the light of the Mæonian star *.

A NOBLE and just character of the first and the best of critics! And sufficient to repress the fashionable and nauseous petulance of several impertinent moderns, who have attempted to discredit this great and useful

that originally concluded his Ode to the King, at present omitted. These were the lines.

J' aime mieux nouvel Icare
Dans les airs cherchant Pindare
Tomber du ciel le plus haut ;
Que louè de Fontenelle,
Razer, craintive hirondelle,
La terre, comme Perault.

This ode was parodied in France ; but not with such incomparable humour, as by our Prior, in England.

To these remarks of Fontenelle may be added what Voltaire says, with his usual vivacity and brevity ; “ Corneille alone formed himself ; but Louis XIV. Colbert, Sophocles, and Euripides, all of them contributed to form Racine.”

* Ver. 646.

writer !

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writer. Whoever surveys the variety and perfection of his productions, all delivered in the chafteft style, in the cleareft order, and the moft pregnant brevity, is amazed at the immenſity of his genius. His logic, however at preſent neglected for thoſe redundant and verbose ſystems, which took their riſe from Locke's Eſſay on the Human Underſtanding, is a mighty effort of the mind: in which are diſcovered the principal ſources of the art of reaſoning, and the dependencies of one thought on another; and where, by the different combinations he hath made of all the forms the underſtanding can aſſume in reaſoning, which he hath traced for it, he hath ſo cloſely confined it, that it cannot depart from them, without arguing inconſequentially. His Phyſics contain many uſeful obſervations, particularly his Hiſtory of Animals; to aſſiſt him in which, Alexander gave orders, that creatures of different climates and countries ſhould, at a great expence, be brought to him, to paſs under his inſpection. His Morals are perhaps the pureſt ſyſtem in antiquity.

His

His Politics are a most valuable monument of the civil wisdom of the ancients ; as they preserve to us the description of several governments, and particularly of Crete and Carthage, that otherwise would have been unknown. But of all his compositions, his Rhetoric and Poetics are most complete. No writer has shewn a greater penetration into the recesses of the human heart, than this philosopher, in the second book of his Rhetoric ; where he treats of the different manners and passions, that distinguish each different age and condition of man ; and from whence Horace plainly took his famous description, in the Art of Poetry *. La Bruyere, Rochefoucault, and Montaigne himself, are not to be compared to him in this respect. No succeeding writer on eloquence, not even Tully, has added any thing new or important on this subject. His Poetics, which I suppose are here by POPE chiefly referred to, seem to have been written for the use of that prince, with whose education Aristotle was honoured,

* Ver. 157.

to give him a just taste in reading Homer and the tragedians: to judge properly of which, was then thought no unnecessary accomplishment in the character of a prince. To attempt to understand poetry without having diligently digested this treatise, would be as absurd and impossible, as to pretend to a skill in geometry, without having studied Euclid. The fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters, wherein he has pointed out the properest methods of exciting **TERROR** and **PITY**, convince us, that he was intimately acquainted with those objects, which most forcibly affect the heart. The prime excellence of this precious treatise is the scholastic precision, and philosophical closeness, with which the subject is handled, without any address to the passions, or imagination. It is to be lamented, that the part of the *Poetics* in which he had given precepts for comedy, did not likewise descend to posterity.

38. HORACE still charms with graceful negligence,
And without method talks us into sense *.

* Ver. 654.

THE

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THE vulgar notion, that Horace wrote his Epistle to the Pisos without method, has been lately confuted, as we hinted before. It is equally false that, that epistle contains a complete Art of Poetry; it being solely confined to the state and defects of the Roman drama. The transitions in the writings of Horace, are some of the most exquisite strokes of his art: many of them pass at present unobserved; and that his cotemporaries were equally blind to this beauty, he himself complains, though with a seeming irony,

Cum lamentamur, non APPARERE labores
Nostros, et TENUI deducta poemata filo *.

IT seems also to be another common mistake, that one of Horace's characteristics is the SUBLIME: of which indeed he has given a very few strokes, and those taken from Pindar, and, probably, from Alcæus †.

* Epist. I. ver. 224. lib. 2.

† “ De Horatio quidem ita sentimus; si Græcorum Lyrica extarent, futurum, ut illius furta quamplurima deprehenderentur: qui tamen imitatores *servum pecus* appellare non dubitarit.— Ex Alcæo, ut opinor, [Horatii] multa, &c.” *Scaliger. Post. L. 5. c. 7.*

His

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His excellence lay in exquisite observations on human life, and in touching the foibles of mankind with delicacy and urbanity. 'Tis easy to perceive this moral turn in all his compositions: the writer of the epistles is discerned in the odes. Elegance, not sublimity, was his grand characteristic. Horace is the most popular author of all antiquity; the reason is, because he abounds in images drawn from familiar life, and in remarks, that "come home to mens business and bosoms." Hence he is more frequently quoted and alluded to, than any poet of a higher cast.

39. See DIONYSIUS Homer's thoughts refine,
And call new beauties forth from ev'ry line. *

THESE prosaic lines, this spiritless eulogy are much below the merit of the critic whom they are intended to celebrate. POPE seems here rather to have considered Dionysius, as the author only of reflections concerning

* Ver. 666.

Y

Homer;

Homer; and to have in some measure overlooked, or at least not to have sufficiently insisted on, his most excellent book, ΠΕΡΙ ΣΥΝΘΗΣΕΩΣ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΩΝ, in which he has unfolded all the secret arts that render composition harmonious. One part of this discourse, I mean from the beginning of the twenty-first to the end of the twenty-fourth Section, is perhaps one of the most useful pieces of criticism extant. He there discusses the three different species of composition; which he divides into the NERVOUS and AUSTERE, the SMOOTH and FLORID, and the MIDDLE, which partakes of the nature of the two others. As examples of the first species, he mentions Antimachus and Empedocles in heroics, Pindar in lyric, Æschylus in tragic poetry, and Thucydides in history. As examples of the second, he produces Hesiod as a writer in heroics; Sappho, Anacreon, and Simonides, in lyric; Euripides ONLY, among tragic writers; among the historians, Ephorus, and Theopompus; and Isocrates, among the rhetoricians: all these,

says

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says he, have used words that are ΛΕΙΑ, καὶ ΜΑΛΑΚΑ, καὶ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΩΠΑ. The writers which he alleges as instances of the third species, who have happily blended the two other species of composition, and who are the most complete models of style, are Homer, in epic poetry; Stesichorus and Alcæus, in lyric; in tragic, Sophocles; in history, Herodotus; in eloquence, Demosthenes; in philosophy, Democritus, Plato, and Aristotle.

40. Fancy and art in gay PETRONIUS please,
The scholar's learning with the courtier's ease*.

FOR what merit Petronius should be placed among useful critics, I could never discern. There are not above two or three pages, containing critical remarks, in his work: the chief merit of which is that of telling a story with grace and ease. His own style is more affected than even that of his cotemporaries, when the Augustan simplicity was laid aside. Many of his metaphors are far-fetched, and mixed; of which this glaring instance may

Ver. 668.

Y 2

be

be alleged. “ Neque concipere aut edere
 “ partum mens potest, nisi ingenti flumine
 “ literarum inundata*.” where animal con-
 ception and delivery, are confounded with
 vegetable production. His character of Ho-
 race, however celebrated, and so often quoted
 as to become nauseous, “ Horatii *curiosa fæ-*
licitas,” is surely a very unclassical inver-
 sion; for he ought to have called it the
happy carefulness of Horace, rather than his
careful happiness. I shall observe by the
 way, that the copy of this author found some
 years ago, bears many signatures of its spuri-
 ousness, and particularly of its being forged
 by a Frenchman. For we have this ex-
 pression, “ ad CASTELLA sese receperunt,”
 that is, “ to their CHATEAUX,” instead of
 “ ad *Villas*.”

41. In grave QUINTILIAN's copious work we find
 The justest rules, and clearest method join'd †.

To commend Quintilian barely for his
 method, and to insist merely on this excel-

* Pag. 109. Ed. Amstærl. 1663. † Ver. 669.

lence,

lence, is below the merit of one of the most rational and elegant of Roman writers. Considering the nature of Quintilian's subject, he afforded copious matter, for a more appropriated and poetical character. No author ever adorned a scientific treatise with so many beautiful metaphors. Quintilian was found in the bottom of a tower of the monastery of St. Gal, by Poggius; as appears by one of his letters dated 1417, written from Constance, when the council was then sitting. The monastery was about twenty miles from that city. Silius Italicus, and Valerius Flaccus, were found at the same time and place. A history of the manner by which the manuscripts of ancient authors were found, would be an entertaining work to persons of literary curiosity.

42. Thee bold LONGINUS all the Nine inspire,
And blest their critic with a poet's fire *.

THIS abrupt address to Longinus is more spirited and striking, and more suitable to

* Ver. 676.

the

the character of the person addressed, than if he had coldly spoken of him in the third person. The taste and sensibility of Longinus were exquisite; but his observations are too general, and his method too loose. The precision of the true philosophical critic is lost in the declamation of the florid rhetorician. Instead of shewing for what reason a sentiment or image is *SUBLIME*, and discovering the secret power by which they affect a reader with pleasure, he is ever intent on producing something *SUBLIME himself*, and strokes of his *own* eloquence. Instead of pointing out the foundation of the grandeur of Homer's imagery, where he describes the motion of Neptune, the critic is endeavouring to rival the poet, by saying that, "there was not room enough in the whole earth, to take such another step." He should have shewn why the speech of Phaeton to his son, in a fragment of Euripides, was so lively and picturesque: instead of which he ardently exclaims, "would not you say, that the soul of the writer ascended the chariot
" with

“ with the driver, and was whirled along
 “ in the same flight and danger with the
 “ rapid horses?” We have lately seen a just
 specimen of the genuine method of criticising,
 in Mr. Harris’s accurate Discourse on Poetry,
 Painting, and Music. I have frequently won-
 dered, that Longinus, who mentions Tully,
 should have taken no notice of Virgil. I
 suppose he thought him only a servile copier
 of the Greeks.

43. From the same foes, at last, both felt their doom,
 And the same age saw learning fall and Rome*.

“ ’TWAS the fate of Rome to have scarce
 an intermediate age, or single period of time,
 between the rise of arts and fall of liberty.
 No sooner had that nation begun to lose the
 roughness and barbarity of their manners,
 and learn of Greece to form their heroes,
 their orators, and poets on a right model,
 than by their unjust attempt upon the liberty
 of the world, they justly lost their own.
 With their liberty, they lost not only their
 force of eloquence, but even their style and

* Ver. 686.

language itself. The poets who afterwards arose among them, were mere unnatural and forced plants. Their two most finished, who came last, and closed the scene, were plainly such as had seen the days of liberty, and felt the sad effects of its departure *."

SHAFTESBURY proceeds to observe, that when despotism was fully established, not a statue, picture, or medal, not a tolerable piece of architecture, afterwards appeared.— And it was, I may add, the opinion of Longinus, and Addison, who adopted it from him, that arbitrary governments were pernicious to the fine arts, as well as to the sciences. Modern history, however, has afforded an example to the contrary. Painting, sculpture, and music, have been seen to arrive to a high perfection in Rome, notwithstanding the slavery and superstition that reign there: nay, superstition itself has been highly productive of these fine arts; for with what enthusiasm must a popish painter work

* ADVICE to an Auth. Vol. i. pag. 148. Edit. 12mo.

for an altar-piece? There have been instances of painters, who before they began to work, have always received the sacrament. Neither Dante, Ariosto, nor Tasso, flourished in free governments; and it seems * chimerical to assert, that Milton would never have written his *Paradise Lost*, if he had not seen monarchy destroyed, and the state thrown into disorder. Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Julio Romano, lived in despotic states. The fine arts, in short, are naturally attendant upon power and luxury. But the sciences require unlimited freedom, to raise them to their full vigour and growth. In a MONARCHY, there may be poets, painters, and musicians; but orators, historians, and philosophers, can exist in a REPUBLIC alone.

44. A second deluge learning thus o'er-run,
And the monks finish'd what the Goths begun †.

EVERY custom and opinion that can degrade and deform humanity, was to be found

* See *ENQUIRY* into the Life and Writings of Homer, Sect. v. pag. 67.

† Ver. 692.

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in the times here alluded to. The most cruel tyranny, and the grossest superstition, reigned without controul. Men seemed to have lost not only the light of learning, but of their common reason. Duels, divinations, the ordeal, and all the oppressive customs of the feudal laws, were universally practiced: witchcraft, possessions, revelations, and astrology *, were generally believed. The † clergy were so ignorant, that in some of the most solemn acts of synods, such words as these are to be found: “ *As my lord bishop cannot write himself, at his request I have subscribed.*” They were at that time so profligate, as to publish Absolutions for any one who had killed his father, mother, sister,

* Even so late as the reign of Charles V. we are informed by Christina of Pisa, that her father, who was the king's astrologer, foretold his death to a moment, in the year 1380. This astrologer was so highly in favour, and esteemed of such importance, as to have a monthly pension of an hundred livres; a considerable sum for that time.

† They celebrated in many churches, particularly at Rouen, what was called, the FEAST OF THE ASS. On this occasion, the ASS, finely drest, was brought before the altar, and they sung before him this elegant anthem, “ *Eb eb eb Sire ANE! eb eb eb Sire ANE!*”

OR

or wife; or had committed the most enormous pollutions. On a survey of these absurd abominations, one is apt to cry out in the emphatical words of Lucretius,

Quæ procul a NOBIS flectat Fortunâ gubernans !

But we may rest secure, if the observation of an acute writer be true, who says, “ Europe will perhaps behold ages of a bad taste, but will never again relapse into barbarism. The sole invention of printing has forbidden that event*”. The only sparks of literature that then remained, were to be found among the mahometans, and not the christians. It was from the ARABIANS that we received astronomy, chemistry, medicine, algebra, and arithmetic. Albategni, a Saracen, some of whose manuscripts are now repositied in the Bodleian library at Oxford, made astronomical observations in the year 880. Our Almanack, AL-MANAC, is an Arabic word. The great church at Cordova in Spain, where the Saracens kept a magnificent court, is a

* *MES PENSÉES*, par M. Beaumelle, cccclxv.

monument of their skill in architecture. The game of chess, that admirable effort of the human mind, was by them invented; as were tilts and tournaments. Averroes translated, and commented upon, the greatest part of Aristotle's works*, and was the introducer of that author's philosophy into the † west. It was Gerbert, who in the reign of Hugh Capet, is said to have introduced into France, the Arabian and Indian cypher: for the Arabians had borrowed from the Indians this manner of computing, and Gerbert learned it from the Saracens, when he made a journey into Spain. Gerbert also undertook to make the first clock, the motion of which was regulated by a balance; which method was made use of till the year 1650, when they began to place a pendulum in-

* I have seen a translation of his Comment on the Poetics, with this title. "AVERROYS Summa in Aristotelis Poeticam; ex Arabico sermone in Latinum traducta ab Hermanno Alemano. Præmittitur Determinatio IBINROSDIN [*another Arabian writer*] in Poetria Aristotelis. Venetiis, apud Georgium Arrivabenum, 1515."

† From Sadi, an Arabian Poet, Milton took the grand idea of the bridge over chaos.

stead

stead of the balance. “ Can it be believed, says Mr. Henault, that there ever was so little intercourse between the provinces of France, that an abbot of Clugni, being invited by Bouchard Count of Paris, to bring his Religious to St. Maurdes-Fossés, excused himself from making so long a journey, into a country UNKNOWN, and to which he was so much a STRANGER?” Charlemagne, indeed, two centuries before this last mentioned time, had endeavoured to bring civility and learning into France: he introduced the Gregorian chant, and established a * school in his palace, where the famous Alcuin, whom he invited from England, instructed the Youth. Each of the members of this academy took a particular name; and Charlemagne himself, who did it the honour to become one of it’s members, assumed that of David. This attempt to civilize his barbarous subjects, was as arduous, and worthy his great genius, as his noble project to open

* He is said to have founded the university of Paris. Twyne’s Antiq. Acad. Oxon. Apolog. edit. 1608. pag. 158, et seq.

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a communication between the Ocean and the Euxine Sea, and to join the Rhine to the Danube by a canal.

45. At length ERASMUS, that great, injur'd name,
 (The glory of the priesthood, and the shame!)
 Stem'd the wild torrent of a barb'rous age,
 And drove those holy Vandals off the stage *.

IT were to be wished, our author had drawn a larger and fuller portrait of this wonderful man, of whom he appears to have been so fond, as to declare in the Letters †, that he had some design of writing his life in latin. I call Erasmus a wonderful man, not only on account of the variety, and classical purity of his works, but of that penetration, that strong and acute sense, which enabled him to pierce through the absurdities of the times, and expose them with such poignant ridicule, and attic elegance. A work of humour, and of humour directed to expose the priests, in that age, was indeed a prodigy. The irony of the Encomium on Folly has never been excelled. Erasmus, though a

* Ver. 694.

† Vol. vii. Pag. 232.

commentator,

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commentator, had taste; and tho' a catholic, had charity. His learning was enlivened with wit; and his orthodoxy was tempered with moderation. He was never dazzled with what was called ERUDITION; or misled by that blind and undistinguishing veneration which was naturally paid to the antients, on the first discovery of their writings. By his CICERONIANUS, he repressed the affectation of imitating Tully's manner of expression, in every species of composition. In his ECCLESIASTES, very excellent rules are laid down for preaching. In his DIALOGUES, the superstitions of the Romish church are exposed with all the pleasantry of Lucian: an author, to whom his genius bore great resemblance; and some of whose dialogues he has translated with their original spirit. Indeed, among the many translators of Greek authors who flourished at that time, Erasmus seems to have been in all respects the most eminent. To him was the restoration of literature principally owing. More than one prince solicited his friendship, and invited him to their courts.

We

We see in a letter of Erasmus, written in the year 1516, that Francis I. who shared with Leo X. the glory of reviving sciences and arts in Europe, having declared to Petit his confessor, that he intended to bring into France the most learned men he could find, Petit had charged Budæus, and Cop the royal physician, to write to Erasmus, to engage him to settle in France: that Stephen Poncher, ambassador from the king at Brussels, pressed him still more; but that Erasmus made his excuses, because his catholic majesty Charles V. had retained him in the Low-countries. The life of Erasmus, which deserves the finest pen, has been wretchedly and frigidly written by Knight; although, indeed, the materials he has collected are curious and useful.

46. But see! each muse in Leo's golden days,
Starts from her trance, and trims her wither'd bays:
Rome's ancient Genius, o'er its ruins spread,
Shakes off the dust, and rears his rev'rend head*.

HISTORY has recorded five ages of the world, in which the human mind has ex-

* Ver. 698.

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erted itself in an extraordinary manner; and in which it's productions in literature and the fine arts have arrived at a perfection, not equalled in other periods. The **FIRST**, is the age of Philip and Alexander; about which time flourished Socrates, Plato, Demosthenes, Aristotle, Lyfippus, Apelles, Phidias, Praxiteles, Thucydides, Xenophon, Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Menander, Philemon. The **SECOND** age, which has never yet been sufficiently taken notice of, was that of Ptolomy Philadelphus, king of Ægypt; in which appeared Lycophron, Aratus, Nicander, Apollonius Rhodius, Theocritus, Callimachus, Eratosthenes, Philichus, Erisistratus the physician, Timæus the historian, Cleanthes, Diogenes the painter, and Softrates the architect. This prince, from his love of learning, commanded the Old Testament to be translated into Greek. The **THIRD** age is that of Julius Cæsar, and Augustus; marked with the illustrious names of Laberius, Catullus, Lucretius, Cicero, Livy, Varro, Virgil, Horace, Propertius, Tibullus, Ovid, Phædrus,

drus, Vitruvius, Dioscorides. The FOURTH age was that of Julius II. and Leo X. which produced, Ariosto, Taffo, Fracastorius, San-nazarius, Vida, Bembo, Sadolet, Machiavel, Guiccardin, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Titian. The FIFTH age, is that of Louis XIV. in France, and of king William and queen Anne in England: in which, or thereabouts, are to be found, Corneille, Moliere, Racine, Boileau, Fontaine, Boffuet, Rochefoucault, Pafchal, Bourdaloue, Patru, Malbranche, De Retz, Bruyere, St. Real, Fenelon, Lully, Le Sæur, Pouffin, Le Brun, Puget, Theodon, Gerardon, Edelinck, Nanteuill, * Perrault, Dryden, Tillotson, Temple, POPE, Addison, Garth, Congreve, Rowe, Prior, Lee, Swift, Bolingbroke, Atterbury, Boyle, Locke, Newton, Clarke, Kneller, Thornhill, Jervas, Purcell, Mead, Friend.

CONCERNING the particular encouragement given by Leo X. to polite literature, and the fine arts, I forbear to enlarge; because a friend

* The Architect.

of mine is at present engaged in writing, *THE HISTORY OF THE AGE OF LEO X.* It is a noble period, and full of those most important events, which have had the greatest influence on human affairs. Such as the discovery of the West-Indies, by the Spaniards, and of a passage to the East, by the Portuguese: the invention of printing; the reformation of religion; with many others: all which will be insisted upon at large, and their consequences displayed. I shall only here transiently observe, that some efforts to emerge from barbarity had long before this time appeared in Italy. Dante wrote his sublime * and original poem, which is a kind of satirical epic, and which abounds in images and sentiments equal to the best of Homer, but whose works he had never seen, about the year 1310. Giotto the disciple of Cimabue, the friend of Dante, and subject of his praises, was employed, about the same time, by Benedict XI; and a picture of mosaic work

* See particularly the beginning of the third canto of the *INFERNO*, as also the beginning of the sixth.

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done by him, over the gate of St. Peter's church at Rome, is still remaining. A Tuscan, called Guy of Arezzo, invented the musical notes in use at present: and Brunelleschi built palaces at Florence, in the style of ancient architecture. Soon afterwards, Boccace and Petrarch polished, and fixed the standard of, the Italian language *. To Petrarch the honour is generally attributed of having restored the elegance of the Latin tongue; particularly in poetry. But a late acute searcher into antiquity, whose death is justly lamented, the learned Scipio Maffei, has informed us † in a curious passage, that this was not so

* “ Veggiamo in un medesimo prodeffo di tempo (dal regno principalmente dell'una, e dell'altra Sicilia, e poi della Lombardia, e de vari, e distinti luoghi d'Italia) sorgere scrittori, i quali anno favella con Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio, ed altri Toscani autori commune, e con loro anche commune l'autorità, da ogni regulator dalla lingua riconosciuta, i quali, tra molti altri, furrono Guidotto Bolognese, Marco Polo Veneziano, Pier Crescenzia da Bologna, Guido Giudice Messinese, Giacompo Colonna Romano, Federico II. imperadore, Pier delle Vigne Capoano, Benvenuto da Imola, Fra Jacopone da Todi, Onesto Bolognese, Guido Guislieri, Semprebene, Fabrovio, Guido Guislieri, Jacopo della Lana, Giotto Mantovano.”

Gravina della Rag. Poet. lib. ii. pag. 170.

† TEATRO Italiano. In Verona, 1723. tom. i. pag. 4.

much

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much owing to Petrarch, as to Albertino Mussato, a native of Padua : with whose merit the learned seem not to be sufficiently acquainted. Mussato died very old, after having borne the greatest offices in his country, in the year 1329, that is to say, thirty-five years before Petrarch. He wrote not only many books of a history of his own times, but also an heroic poem on the siege of Padua, by the Veronese, under the great Can; together with eclogues, elegies, epistles in verse, and an Ovidian Cento. However, to form a full judgment in this case, one need only peruse his two latin tragedies entitled *ECCERINIS*, and *ACHILLES*, which he composed in the style and manner of Seneca : and which were the first regular and perfect dramas, that are to be found since the barbarous and obscure ages.

47. Immortal VIDA ; on whose honour'd brow
The Poet's bays, and Critic's ivy grow *.

THE merits of Vida seem not to have been particularly attended to in England, 'till POPE

* Ver. 706.

had

had bestowed this commendation upon him: although the Poetics had been correctly published at Oxford, by Basil Kennet, some time before. The SILKWORMS of Vida are written with classical purity, and with a just mixture of the styles of Lucretius and Virgil. It was a happy choice to write a poem on CHESS; nor is the execution less happy. The various stratagems, and manifold intricacies of this ingenious game, so difficult to be described in latin, are here expressed with the greatest perspicuity and elegance; so that perhaps the game might be learned from this description. Amidst many prosaic flatnesses, there are many fine strokes in the CHRISTIAD: particularly, his angels, with respect to their persons and insignia, are drawn with that dignity, which we so much admire in Milton; who seems to have had his eye on those passages. * Gravina applauds Vida, for having found out a method to introduce the whole history of our Saviour's life, by putting it into the mouth of St. Joseph and St. John,

* Della Ragion. Poet. pag. 127.

who

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who relate it to Pilate. But surely this speech, consisting of as many lines as that of Dido to Æneas, was too long to be made on such an occasion; when Christ was brought before the tribunal of Pilate, to be judged and condemned to death. The Poetics are perhaps the most perfect of his compositions: they are excellently translated by Pitt. Vida had formed himself upon Virgil, who is therefore his hero: he has too much depreciated Homer. Although his precepts principally regard epic poetry, yet many of them are applicable to every species of composition. This poem has the praise of being one of the * first, if not the very first, pieces of criticism, that appeared in Italy, since the revival of learning: for it was finished, as is evident from a short advertisement prefixed to it, in the year 1520. It is remarkable, that most of the great poets about this time, wrote an Art of Poetry. Trissino, a name respected

* Victorius's latin translation of Aristotle's Poetics, was published at Florence, 1560. Castelvetro's Italian one at Vienna, 1570.

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for giving to Europe the first regular epic poem, and for first daring to throw off the bondage of rhyme, published at Vicenza, in the year 1529, *DELLA POETICA, divisioni quattro*, several years before his *Italia Liberata*. We have of Fracastorius, NAUGERIUS, *five de Poetica dialogus*, Venetiis, 1555. Minturnus, *DE POETA, libri sex*, appeared at Venice, 1559. Bernardo Tasso, the father of Torquato, and author of an epic poem entitled *L'Amadigi*, wrote *RAGIONAMENTO della Poesia*, printed at Venice, 1562. And to pay the highest honour to criticism, the great Torquato Tasso himself wrote *DISCORSI del Poema Eroico*, printed at Venice, 1587. These discourses are full of learning and taste. But I must not omit a curious anecdote, which * Menage has given us in his *Anti-Baillet*; namely, that Sperone claimed these discourses as his own: for he thus speaks of them in one of his letters to Felice Paciotto; "Laudo voi infinitamente di voler scrivere della poetica; della quale interrogato molto

* Tom. i. pag. 353.

fiate dal Taffo *, e rispondendogli io liberamente, fi come foglio, egli n'a fatto un volume, e mandato al Signior Scipio Gonzaga per cofa fua, e non mea : ma io ne chiarirò il mondo."

48. And BOILEAU ftill in right of Horace fways †.

MAY I be pardoned for declaring it as my opinion, that Boileau's is the beft ‡ Art of Poetry extant? The brevity of his precepts, enlivened by proper imagery, the juftnefs of his metaphors, the harmony of his numbers, as far as alexandrine lines will admit, the exactnefs of his method, the perfpicacity of his remarks, and the energy of his ftyle, all duly confidered, may render this opinion not unreafonable. It is fcarcely to be conceived, how much is comprehended in four fhort cantos §. He that has well digefted thefe,

* It may be remarked, as an inftance of Taffo's JUDGEMENT, that he himfelf did not approve the epifode of Sophronia and Olindo, fo commonly cenfured.

† Ver. 715.

‡ It was tranflated into Portugueze verfe, by Count d'Ericeyra.

§ It is remarkable, Boileau declared he had never read Vida.

cannot be said to be ignorant of any important rule of poetry. The tale of the physician turning architect, in the fourth canto, is told with vast pleasantries. It is to this work Boileau owes his immortality: which was of the highest utility to his nation, in diffusing a just way of thinking and writing, banishing every species of false wit, and introducing a general taste for the manly simplicity of the ancients, on whose writings this poet had formed his taste. Boileau's chief talent was the DIDACTIC. His fancy was not the predominant faculty of his mind. Fontenelle has thus characterised him. " Il étoit grand et excellent versificateur, pourvû cependant que cette louange se renferme dans ses beaux jours, dont la différence avec les autres est bien marquée, et faisoit souvent dire *Helas!* et *Hola!* mais il n'étoit pas grand poëte, si l'entend par ce mot, comme on le doit, celui qui FAIT, qui INVENTE, qui CREE *."

49. Such was the muse, whose rules and practice tell,
 " Nature's chief master-piece is writing well †."

* Œuvres de Fontenelle. Tom. iii. pag. 376. à Paris, 1752.

† Ver. 724.

THIS high panegyric procured to POPE the acquaintance, and afterwards, the constant friendship, of the duke of Buckingham: who, in his ESSAY here alluded to, has followed the method of Boileau, in discoursing on the various species of poetry, to no other purpose than to manifest his own inferiority. The piece is, indeed, of the satyric, rather than of the preceptive, kind. The coldness and neglect with which this writer, formed only on the French critics, speaks of Milton, must be considered as proofs of his want of critical discernment, or of critical courage. I can recollect no performance of Buckingham, that stamps him a true genius. His reputation was owing to his rank. In reading his poems, one is apt to exclaim with our author,

What woful stuff this madrigal would be,
In some starv'd hackney sonneteer or me?
But let a LORD ONCE OWN the happy lines,
How the wit brightens! how the style refines!
Before his sacred name flies every fault,
And each exalted stanza teems with thought.

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THE best part of Buckingham's ESSAY is that, in which he gives a ludicrous account of the plan of modern tragedy. I should add, that his compliment to POPE, prefixed to his poems, contains a pleasing picture of the sedateness and retirement proper to age, after the tumults of public life; and by it's moral turn, breathes the spirit, if not of a poet, yet of an amiable old Man.

50. Such was ROSCOMMON *. — — —

AN ESSAY on Translated Verse seems at first sight to be a barren subject; yet Roscommon has decorated it with many precepts of utility and taste, and enlivened it with a tale, in imitation of Boileau. It is indisputably better written than the last-mentioned ESSAY. Roscommon was more learned than Buckingham. He was bred under Bochart at Caen in Normandy. He had laid a design of forming a society for the refining, and fixing the standard of, our language: in which project, his intimate friend Dryden was a

* Ver. 726.

principal

principal assistant. This was the first attempt of that sort; and, I fear, we shall never see another set on foot in our days: even though Mr. Johnson has lately given us so excellent a dictionary. It may be remarked to the praise of Roscommon, that he was the first critic who had taste and spirit enough, publicly to praise the *Paradise Lost*; with a noble encomium of which, and a rational recommendation of blank verse, he concludes his performance. Fenton, in his *Observations on Waller*, has accurately delineated his character. “ His imagination might have probably been more fruitful, and sprightly, if his judgment had been less severe: but that severity, delivered in a masculine, clear, succinct style, contributed to make him so eminent in the didactical manner, that no man with justice can affirm, he was ever equalled by any of our own nation, without confessing at the same time, that he is inferior to none. In some other kinds of writing, his genius seems to have wanted fire to attain the point of perfection: but who can attain it*?”

* Edit. 12mo. pag. 136.

51. Such late was WALSH, the muse's judge and friend*.

IF POPE has here given too magnificent an elogy to Walsh, it must be attributed to friendship, rather than to judgment. Walsh was in general a flimzy and frigid writer. The Rambler calls his works *PAGES OF INANITY*. His three letters to POPE, however, are well written. His remarks on the nature of pastoral poetry, on borrowing from the ancients, and against florid conceits, are worthy perusal†. POPE owed much to Walsh: it was he who gave him a very important piece of advice, in his early youth; for he used to tell our author, that there was one way still left open for him, by which he might excel any of his predecessors, which was, by *CORRECTNESS*; that though indeed we had several great poets, we as yet could boast of none that were perfectly *CORRECT*; and that therefore, he advised him to make this quality his particular study.

* Ver. 730.

† Vol. 7. pag. 67. &c.

CORRECTNESS is a vague term, frequently used without meaning and precision. It is perpetually the nauseous cant of the French critics, and of their advocates and pupils, that the English writers are generally INCORRECT. If CORRECTNESS implies an absence of petty faults, this perhaps may be granted. If it means, that, because their tragedians have avoided the irregularities of Shakespeare, and have observed a juster œconomy in their fables, therefore the *Athalie*, for instance, is preferable to *Lear*, the notion is groundless and absurd. The *Henriade* is free from any very gross faults; but who will dare to rank it with the *Paradise Lost*? The declamations with which some of their most perfect tragedies abound, may be reckoned as contrary to the nature of that species of poetry, and as destructive of it's end, as the fools or grave-diggers of Shakespeare. That the French may boast some excellent critics, particularly Boffu, Boileau, Fenelon, and Brumoy, cannot be denied; but that these are sufficient to form a taste upon, without having recourse to the genuine

genuine fountains of all polite literature, I mean the Grecian writers, no one but a superficial sciolist can allow.

I CONCLUDE these reflections with a remarkable fact. In no polished nation, after criticism has been much studied, and the rules of writing established, has any very extraordinary work ever appeared. This has visibly been the case, in Greece, in Rome, and in France; after Aristotle, Horace, and Boileau, had written their ARTS OF POETRY. In our own country, the rules of the drama, for instance, were never more completely understood than at present: yet what UNINTERESTING, though FAULTLESS, tragedies, have we lately seen? So much better is our judgment than our execution. How to account for the fact here mentioned, adequately and justly, would be attended with all those difficulties that await discussions relative to the productions of the human mind; and to the delicate and secret causes that influence them. Whether or no, the natural powers be not confined
and

and debilitated by that timidity and caution which is occasioned by a rigid regard to the dictates of art; or whether that philosophical, that geometrical, and systematical spirit so much in vogue, which has spread itself from the sciences even into polite literature, by consulting only REASON, has not diminished and destroyed SENTIMENT; and made our poets write from and to the HEAD rather than the HEART: Or whether, lastly, when just models, from which the rules have necessarily been drawn, have once appeared, succeeding writers, by vainly and ambitiously striving to surpass those just models, and to shine and surprise, do not become stiff, and forced, and affected in their thoughts and diction.

S E C T. IV.

Of the RAPE of the LOCK.

IF the Moderns have excelled the Ancients in any species of writing, it seems to be in satire: and, particularly in that kind of satire, which is conveyed in the form of the epopee, a pleasing vehicle of satire, seldom, if ever, used by the ancients; for we know so little of the Margites of Homer, that it cannot be produced as an example. As the poet disappears in this way of writing, and does not deliver the intended censure in his own proper person, the satire becomes more delicate, because more oblique. Add to this, that a tale or story more strongly engages and interests the reader, than a series of precepts or reproofs, or even of characters themselves, however lively and natural. An heroi-comic poem may therefore be justly esteemed the most excellent kind of satire.

THE invention of it is usually ascribed to Alessandro Tassoni; who in the year 1622,
published

published at Paris, a poem composed by him, in a few months of the year 1611, entitled *LA SECCHIA RAPITA*, or *The Rape of the Bucket*. To avoid giving offence, it was first printed under the name of Androvini Melifoni. It was afterwards reprinted at Venice, corrected, with the name of the author, and with some illustrations of Gasparo Salviani. But the learned and curious Crescembini, in his *Istoria della Volgar Poesia* *, informs us, that it is doubtful whether the invention of the † heroi-comic poem ought to be ascribed to Tassoni, or to Francesco Bracciolini, who wrote § *Lo SCHERNO DE GLI DEI*, which performance, though it was printed four years after *LA SECCHIA*, is nevertheless declared in an epistle prefixed, to have been written many years sooner. The real subject of Tassoni's poem was the war which the inhabitants of Modena declared against those of Bologna, on

* Lib. i. pag. 78. In Roma, per il Chracas, 1698.

† E tal Poesia puo diffinirsi, e chiamarsi, imitazione d'azione seria fatto con riso. Crescembini, ibid.

§ In Venetia, 1627. There is prefixed, by way of preface, a facetious dialogue betwixt Thalia and Urania.

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the refusal of the latter to restore to them some towns, which had been detained ever since the time of the emperor Frederic II. The author artfully made use of a popular tradition, according to which it was believed, that a certain wooden bucket, which is kept at Modena, in the treasury of the cathedral, came from Bologna, and that it had been forcibly taken away by the Modenese. Crescimbini adds, that because Tassoni had severely ridiculed the Bolognese, Bartolomeo Bocchini, to revenge his countrymen, printed at Venice 1641, a tragico-heroi-comic poem, entitled *LE PAZZIE DE SAVI, ovvero, IL LAMBERTACCIO*, in which the Modenese are spoken of with much contempt. The Italians have a fine turn for works of humour, in which they abound. They have another poem of this species, called *MALMANTILE RACQUISTATO*, written by Lorenzo Lippi, in the year 1676, which Crescimbini * highly commends, calling it, “*Spiritofissimo e legiadriissimo poema giacoso.*” It was after-

* Pag. 368. lib. 5.

wards

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wards reprinted at Florence 1688, with the useful annotations of Puccio Lamoni, a Florentine painter, who was himself no contemptible poet.

THE LUTRIN of Boileau was the second remarkable poem, in which the Serious and Comic were happily blended. Boileau himself has given a circumstantial account of what gave occasion to this poem : which account, because it is entertaining, and not printed in the common editions of his works, I will insert at length. “ I shall not here act like Ariosto, who frequently when he is going to relate the most absurd story in the world, solemnly protests it to be true, and supports it by the authority of archbishop Turpin. For my part I freely declare, the whole poem of the *DESK* is nothing but pure fiction ; that it is all invented, even to the name itself of the place where the action passes. An odd occasion gave rise to this poem. In a company I was lately engaged in, the conversation turned upon epic poetry : every one delivered his opinion, according to his abilities ;

ties; when mine was asked, I confirmed what I had advanced in my Art of Poetry, that an heroic poem, to be truly excellent, ought to be charged with little MATTER, which it was the business of invention to support and extend. The opinion was warmly contested: but after many reasons for and against, it happened, as it generally does in this sort of disputes, that nobody was convinced, and that each continued in his own opinion. The heat of dispute being over, we talked on other subjects; and laughed at the violence into which we had been betrayed, in discussing a question of so little consequence. We moralized on the folly of men who pass almost their whole lives, in treating the greatest trifles in a serious manner; and in making to themselves an important affair of something quite indifferent. To this purpose, a country gentleman related a famous quarrel, that had lately happened in a little church in his province, between the treasurer and the chantor, the two principal dignitaries of that church, about the place in which a reading-desk

desk was to stand. We thought it a droll affair. Upon this, one of the critics in company, who could not so soon forget our late dispute, asked me, if I, who thought so little MATTER necessary for an heroic poem, would undertake to write one on a quarrel so little abounding in incidents, as this of the two ecclesiastics. “ J’eus plutôt dit, pourquoi non ? que je n’eus fait reflexion sur ce qu’il me demandoit.” This made the company laugh, and I could not help laughing with them ; not in the least imagining, that I should ever be able to keep my word. But finding myself at leisure in the evening, I revolved the subject in my mind, and having considered in every view the pleasantry that it would admit of, I made twenty verses which I shewed to my friends. They were diverted with this beginning. The pleasure which I saw these gave them, induced me to write twenty more. Thus, from twenty verses to twenty, I lengthened the work to near nine hundred. This is the whole history of the trifle I now offer to the public.—It is a

new

new kind of burlesque, which I have introduced into our language : for as in the other kind of burlesque, that of Scarron, Dido and Æneas spoke like fish-women and porters, in this of mine, a * clock-maker and his wife talk like Dido and Æneas. I do not know whether my poem will have all the qualities requisite to satisfy a reader : but I dare flatter myself, that it will at least be allowed to have the grace of novelty ; because I do not conceive, that there are any works of this nature in our language ; the *DEFAITES DES BOUTS RIMES* of Sarasin being rather a mere allegory than a poem, as this is."

ON a subject seemingly so unpromising and incapable of ornament, has Boileau found a method of raising a poem full of beautiful imagery ; which appears like that magnificent city †, which the greatest of princes caused to be built in a morass. Boileau has enlivened this piece with many unexpected incidents and entertaining episodes ;

* Altered afterwards to a BARBER. † Petersburg.

Particularly

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Maxima de nihilo nascitur historia. Prop.

Particularly that of the Perruquier, in the second canto, and of the Battle of the Books, in the fifth. The satire throughout is poignant, though polite, to the last degree. The indolence and luxury of the priests are ridiculed with the most artful delicacy. What a picture has he drawn of the chamber and bed of the treasurer, where every thing was calculated to promote and preserve inactivity and ease!

Dans le réduit obscur d'un alcove enfoncée *
S'élève un lit de plume a grand frais amassée.
Quatre rideaux pompeux, par un double contour,
En défendent l'entrée à la clarté du jour.
Là, parmi les douceurs d'un tranquille silence,
Regne sur le duvet une heureuse Indolence.
C'est là que Prelat muni d'un déjeuner,
Dormant d'un léger somme, attendoit le dîner.
La jeunesse en sa fleur brille sur son visage,
Son menton sur son sein descend a double étage :
Et son corps ramassé dans sa courte grosseur,
Fait gémir les coussins soit sa molle épaisseur †

* Compare with this the account of the Canon fed by his House-keeper, in *Gil Blas*.

† Chant. i.

D d

The

The astonishment of Gilotin, the treasurer's almoner, to find that his master intends to go out before dinner, is extremely natural; and his remonstrances are inimitably droll and pertinent.

Lui montre le peril : Que midi va sonner :
 Qu'il va, faire, s'il fort, refroidir le dîner.
 Quelle fureur, dit-il, quel aveugle caprice,
 Quand le diner est prest, vous appelle à l'Office ?
 De votre dignité soutenir mieux l'éclat.
 Est-ce pour travailler que vous êtes Prélat ?
 A quoi bon ce dégoût et ce zelo inutile ?
 Est-il donc pour jeuner Quatre temps, ou Vigile ?
 Reprenez vos esprits, et souvenez-vous bien,
 Qu'un diner rechauffé ne valut jamais rien *.

How admirably, is the character of an ignorant and eating priest, preserved in this speech of the sleek and pampered Canon Evrard, one of the drones, who,

— — In that exhaustless hive
 On fat pluralities supinely thrive † !

Moi ? dit-il, qu'a mon âge Ecolier tout nouveau,
 J'aille pour un Lutrin me troubler le cerveau ?

* Chant. 1.

† 1s1s.

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 211

O le plaifant confeil ! non, non fongez a vivre,
 Va maigrir, fi tu veux, et fecher fur un Livre.
 Pour moi je lis la Bible autant que l'Alcoran :
 Je fai ce qu'un Fermier nous doit rendre par an :
 Sur quelle vigne a Rheims nous avons hypothèque ;
 Vingt muids rangez chez moi font ma Bibliothéque.
 En plaçant un Popitre on croit nous rabbaiffer,
 Mon bras feul fans Latin fera le renverfer.
 Que m'importe qu'Arnauld me condamne ou m'approuve ?
 J'abbats ce que me nuit par tout où je le trouve.
 C'est la mon fentiment. A quoi bon tant d'apprêts ?
 Du refte déjeunons, Meffieurs, et beuvons frais *.

HIS knowledge of the rents of his church, and of the mortgages belonging to it; his fcorn of the pious and laborious Arnauld, his contempt of learning, and, above all, his ruling paffion of good-eating, are ftrokes highly comic. It is wonderful the ecclefiaftics of France were not as much irritated by the publication of the LUTRIN, as by the TARTUFFE of Moliere; which was fuppreffed by their intereft, after it had been acted a few nights: although at the fame time, a very profane farce was permitted to

* Chant. iv.

have a long run. When Louis XIV. expressed to the Prince of Condè, his wonder at the different fates of these two pieces, and asked the reason of it, the prince answered, " In the farce, RELIGION *only* is ridiculed; but, Moliere in the TARTUFFE, has attacked even the PRIESTS."

BOILEAU has raised his subjects by many personifications; particularly, in the beginning of the sixth canto, PIETY who had retired to the great Carthusian monastery on the Alps, is introduced as repairing to Paris, accompanied by FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY, in order to make her complaint to THEMIS: to which may be added, the monstrous figure of CHICANERY, attended by FAMINE, WANT, SORROW, and RUIN, in the beginning of the fifth canto. The chief divinity that acts throughout the poem, is DISCORD; which goddess is represented as coming from a convent of Cordeliers. A fine stroke of satire; but imitated from the satirical Ariosto, who makes Michael find Dis-

CORD

CORD in a cloister, instead of SILENCE, whom he there searched for in vain. NIGHT is also introduced as an actress with great propriety, in the third canto; where she repairs to the famous old tower at Montlery, in order to find out an owl which she may convey into the DESK, and which afterwards produces so ridiculous a consternation. SLOTH is another principal personage: she also is discovered in the dormitory of a monastery.

Les Plaisirs nonchalans folêtrent a l'entour.

L'un pâitrit dans un coin l'embonpoint des Chanoines;

L'autre broye en riant le vermillon des Moines.*

The speech she afterwards makes has a peculiar beauty, as it ends in the middle of a line; and by that means shews her inability to proceed.

THE third heroi-comic poem was the DISPENSARY of Garth: a palpable imitation of the LUTRIN, and the best satire on the physicians extant, except the SANGRADO of Le Sage, who have indeed been the object

* Chant. ii.

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of almost every satirist. The behaviour and sentiments of SLOTH, the first imaginary being that occurs, are almost literally translated from Boileau: particularly the compliment that SLOTH pays to king William, whose actions disturb her repose:

Or if some cloyster's refuge I implore,
Where holy drones o'er dying tapers snore;
The peals of Nassau's arms these eyes uncloze,
Mine he molests, to give the world repose *.

*Je croyois, loin des lieux d'on ce prince m'exile,
Que l'Eglise du moins m'assûroit un azile.
Mais envain j'esperois y regner sans effroi:
Moines, Abbes, Prieurs, tout s'arme contre moi †.*

Garth, in ridiculing the clergy, speaks of that order with more acrimony than Boileau, who merely laughs at them. But Garth was one of the free-thinking WITS at Button's. He has introduced many excellent parodies on the classics: among which I cannot forbear quoting one, which is an imitation of some passages, which the reader will remem-

* Cant. i.

† Chant. ii.

ber,

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 215
ber, in Virgil's sixth book, and where the
circumstances are happily inverted.

* Since, said the ghost, with pity you'll attend,
Know, I'm Guaiacum, once your firmest friend ;
And on this barren beach, in discontent
Am doom'd to stay, 'till th'angry pow'rs relent.
These spectres seam'd with scars that threaten here,
The victims of my late ill conduct are.
They vex with endless clamours my repose,
This wants his palate, that demands his nose ;
And here they execute stern Pluto's will,
And ply me ev'ry moment with a pill †.

THIS author has been guilty of a strange
impropriety, which cannot be excused, in
making the fury DISEASE talk like a critic,
give rules of writing, and a panegyric on
the best poets of the age ‡. The descent
into the earth in the sixth canto, is a fine
mixture of poetry and philosophy ; the hint

* Boileau says admirably of his physician, Chant 4. Art. Poet

Le rhume a son aspect se change en pleurisie ;
Et par lui la migraine est bientôt phrenesie.

† Cant. vi.

‡ Cant. iv.

is

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is taken from the § *SYPHILIS* of *Fracastorius*. Garth's versification is flowing and musical; his style perspicuous, and neat; and the poem in general abounds with fallies of wit, and nervous satire.

THE RAPE OF THE LOCK, now before us, is the fourth, and most excellent of the heroi-comic poems. The subject was a quarrel occasioned by a little piece of gallantry of Lord Petre, who, in a party of pleasure, found means to cut off a favourite lock of Mrs. Arabella Fermour's hair. POPE was desired to write it, in order to put an end to the quarrel it produced, by Mr. Caryl, who had been secretary to queen Mary, author of Sir Solomon Single a comedy, and of some translations in Dryden's *Miscellanies*. POPE was accustomed to say, "What I wrote fastest always pleased most." The first sketch of this exquisite piece, which Addison

§ "Ed in vero nella Sifillide de l'autore se conoscere quanto una mente della filosofia rigenerata, ed incitata dal furor poetico prevaglia; e con quanto spirito muover possa, ed agitare le materie, che in se rivolge, e fuor di se in armoniosi versi diffonde."

GRAVINA. p. 124. lib. 1.

called

called *MERUM SAL*, was written in less than a fortnight, in two cantos only : but it was so universally applauded, that, in the next year, our poet enriched it with the machinery of the sylphs, and extended it to five cantos; when it was printed with a letter to Mrs. Fermour, far superior to any of Voiture. The insertion of the machinery of the sylphs in proper places, without the least appearance of it's being awkwardly stitched in, is one of the happiest efforts of judgment and art. He took the idea of these invisible beings, so proper to be employed in a poem of this nature, from a little french book entitled, *Le Comte de Gabalis*, of which I have lately met with an account, in an entertaining writer. “ The Abbe Villars, who came from Thoulouse to Paris, to make his fortune by preaching, is the author of this diverting work. The five dialogues of which it consists, are the result of those gay conversations, in which the Abbe was engaged, with a small circle of men, of fine wit and humour, like himself. When this book first appeared, it was universally

read, as innocent and amusing. But at length, it's consequences were perceived, and reckoned dangerous, at a time when this sort of curiosities began to gain credit. Our devout preacher was denied the chair, and his book forbidden to be read. It was not clear whether the author intended to be ironical, or spoke all seriously. The second volume which he promised, would have decided the question: but the unfortunate Abbe was soon afterwards assassinated by ruffians, on the road to Lyons. The laughers gave out, that the gnomes and sylphs, disguised like ruffians, had shot him, as a punishment for revealing the secrets of the Cabala; a crime not to be pardoned by these jealous spirits, as Villars himself has declared in his book *."

IT may not be improper to give a specimen of this author's manner, who has lately been well imitated in the way of mixing jest with earnest, in an elegant piece called HER-

* *Melanges d'Histoire et de Literature.* By Dom. Noel Dargonne, disguised under the name of Vigneul Marville. Tom. prem. pag. 275. edit. Rotterdam, 1700.

MIPPUS REDIVIVUS. The Comte de Gabalis being about to initiate his pupil into the most profound mysteries of the Rosicrucian philosophy, advises him to consider seriously, whether or no he had courage and resolution sufficient to RENOUNCE all those obstacles, which might prevent his arising to that height, which the figure of his nativity promised. “ Le mot de RENONCER, says the scholar, m’effraya, et je ne doutay point qu’il n’allast me proposer de renoncer au baptême ou au paradis. Ainsi ne sçachant comme me tirer de ce mauvais pas; Renoncer, luy dis-je, Monsieur, quoi faut il renoncer a quelque chose? Vrayement, reprit il, il le faut bien; et il le faut si nécessairement, qu’il faut commencer par là. Je ne sçay si vous pourrez vous resoudre: mais je sçay bien que là sagesse l’habite point dans un corps sujet au pechè, comme elle n’entre point dans une ame prevenüe d’erreur ou de malice. Les sages ne vous admittont jamais a leur compagnie, si vous ne renoncez dès á present á un chose qui ne peut compatir avec la sagesse. *Il faut*, ajoûta-t-il tout bas en

se baissant a mon oreille, *il faut renoncer à toute commerce charnel avec les femmes**.' On a diligent perusal of this book, I cannot find that POPE has borrowed any particular circumstances relating to these spirits, but merely the general idea of their existence.

THESE machines are vastly superior to the allegorical personages of Boileau and Garth; not only on account of their novelty, but for the exquisite poetry, and oblique satire, which they have given the poet an opportunity to display. The business and petty concerns of a fine lady, receive an air of importance from the notion of their being perpetually overlooked and conducted, by the interposition of celestial agents.

It is judicious to open the poem, by introducing the Guardian Sylph, warning Belinda against some secret impending danger. The account which Ariel † gives of the na-

* LE COMTE DE GABALIS, ou ENTRETIENS sur les Sciences Secrètes. Second ENTRETIEU, pag. 30. a Amsterdam, 1671.

† Cant. i. ver. 27, to ver. 119.

ture, office, and employment of these inhabitants of air, is finely fancied: into which several strokes of satire are thrown with great delicacy and address.

Think what an equipage thou hast in air,
And view with scorn two pages and a chair.

The transformation of women of different tempers into different kinds of spirits, cannot be too much applauded.

* The sprites of fiery Termagants, in flame
Mount up, and take a salamander's name.

* These images have been lately expressed in Latin, with much purity and elegance; and deserve to be here inserted.

Mortua lascivum resoluta liquefcit in igne m,
Aut abit in molles fmgula nympha notos :
Ætheriosque trahens haustus, tenuiffima turba,
Verfat ad æstivum lucida membra jubar.
Gaudet adhuc circum molles operosa puellas
Versari, et veneres suppeditare novas.
Curat uti dulces commendent oscula risus,
Purior ut sensim prodeat ore rubor :
Ne quatiat comptos animosior aura capillos,
Nec faedet pulcras pufcula faeva genas :
Neve recens maculâ violetur purpura palli,
Excidat aut niveo pendula gemma sinu.
Corpora nympharum vacuas tenuentur in auras ;
At studia in memori pectore prisca manent.

Carm. Quadragef. vol. ii. pag. 32. Oxon. 1748.

Soft

Soft yielding minds to water glide away,
 And sip with Nymphs, their elemental tea.
 The graver Prude sinks downward to a gnome,
 In search of mischief still on earth to roam.
 The light Coquettes in sylphs aloft repair,
 And sport and flutter in the fields of air.

The description of the * toilette, which succeeds, is judiciously given in such magnificent terms, as dignify the offices performed at it. Belinda dressing is painted in as pompous a manner, as Achilles arming. The canto ends with a circumstance, artfully contrived to keep this beautiful machinery in the reader's eye: for after the poet has said, that the fair heroine

Repairs her smiles, awakens ev'ry grace,
 And calls forth all the wonders of her face †,

He immediately subjoins,

The busy sylphs surround their darling care,
 These set the head, and those divide the hair:
 Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown,
 And Betty's prais'd for labours not her own.

THE mention of the Lock ‡, on which the poem turns, is rightly reserved to the

* Cant. i. ver. 121. † Ver. 741. ‡ Cant. ii. ver. 21.

second canto. The sacrifice of the baron to implore success to his undertaking, is another instance of our poet's judgment, in heightening the subject †. The succeeding scene of sailing upon the Thames is most gay and *riant*; and impresses the most pleasing pictures upon the imagination. Here too the machinery is again introduced with much propriety. Ariel summons his denizens of air; who are thus painted with a rich exuberance of fancy.

Some to the sun their insect wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold:
Transparent forms, too thin for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolv'd in light.
Loose to the wind their airy garments flew.
Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew,
Dipt in the richest tincture of the skies,
Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes;
While every beam new transient colours flings,
Colours, that change whene'er they wave their wings ‡.

Ariel afterwards enumerates the functions and employments of the sylphs, in the fol-

† Ver. 57.

‡ Ver. 59.

lowing

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lowing manner: where some are supposed to delight in more gross, and others in more refined occupations.

Ye know the spheres and various tasks, assign'd
By laws eternal to th'ærial kind.
Some in the fields of purest æther play,
And bask and brighten in the blaze of day;
Some guide the course of wandring orbs on high,
Or roll the planets through the boundless sky;
Some, less refin'd, beneath the moon's pale light,
Pursue the stars, that shoot across the night;
Or suck the mists in grosser air below;
Or dip their pinions in the painted bow:
Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,
Or o'er the glebe distil the kindly rain*.

Those who are fond of tracing images and sentiments to their source, may perhaps be inclined to think, that the hint of ascribing tasks and offices to such imaginary beings, is taken from the Fairies and the Ariel of Shakespeare: let the impartial critic determine, which has the superiority of fancy. The employment of Ariel in the *TEMPEST*, is said to be,

* Cant. ii. ver. 75.

— — — To tread the ooze
Of the salt deep;
To run upon the sharp wind of the north;
To do—business in the veins of th' earth,
When it is bak'd with frost;
— — To dive into the fire; to ride
On the curl'd clouds.

And again,

— — In the deep nook, where once
Thou call'd'st me up at midnight, to fetch dew
From the still-vest Bermoothes. — — —

Nor must I omit that exquisite song, in
which his favourite and peculiar pastime is
expressed.

Where the bee sucks, there suck I,
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly,
After sun-set, merrily;
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

With what wildness of imagination, but yet,
with what propriety, are the amusements of
the fairies pointed out, in the MIDSUMMER

F f

NIGHT'S

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NIGHT'S DREAM: amusements proper for
none but fairies!

— — 'Fore the third part of a minute, hence :
Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds:
Some war with rear-mice for their leathern wings,
To make my small elves coats; and some keep back
The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots, and wonders
At our quaint spirits. — — — — —

Shakespeare only could have thought of the
following gratifications for Titania's lover;
and they are fit only to be offered, to her
lover, by a fairy-queen.

Be kind, and courteous to this gentleman,
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.
The honey-bags steal from the humble bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed, and to arise :
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moon-beams from his sleeping eyes.

If it should be thought, that Shakespeare has
the merit of being the first who assigned pro-
per

per employments to imaginary persons, in the foregoing lines, yet it must be granted, that by the addition of the most delicate satire to the most lively fancy, POPE, in the following passage, has excelled any thing in Shakespeare, or perhaps in any other author.

Our humbler province is to tend the fair,
Not a less pleasing, though less glorious care;
To save the powder from too rough a gale,
Nor let th' imprison'd essences exhale;
To draw fresh colours from the vernal flow'rs;
To steal from rainbows, e'er they drop in show'rs,
A brighter wash; to curl their waving hairs,
Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs;
Nay oft, in dreams invention we bestow,
To change a flounce, or add a furbelow *.

THE seeming importance given to every part of female dress, each of which is committed to the care and protection of a different sylph, with all the solemnity of a general appointing the several posts in his army, renders the following passage admirable, on account of it's politeness, poignancy, and poetry.

* Cant. ii. ver. 91.

Haste then ye spirits, to your charge repair ;
 The fluttering fan be Zephyretta's care ;
 The drops to thee, Brillante, we consign ;
 And, Momentilla, let the watch be thine ;
 Do thou, Crispissa, tend the fav'rite lock ;
 Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock. *.

The celebrated raillery of Addison on the hoop-petticoat, has nothing equal to the following circumstance ; which marks the difficulty of guarding a part of dress of such high consequence.

To fifty chosen sylphs, of special note,
 We trust th' important charge the PETTICOAT :
 Oft have we known that sevenfold fence to fail,
 Tho' stiff with hoops, and arm'd with ribs of mail ;
 Form a strong line about the silver bound,
 And guard the wide circumference around †

RIDET HOC, INQUAM, VENUS IPSA ; RIDENT
 SIMPLICES NYMPHÆ, FERUS ET CUPIDO.

OUR poet still rises in the delicacy of his satire, where he employs, with the utmost judgment and elegance, all the implements

* Cant. ii. ver. 111.

† Cant. ii. ver. 117.

and furniture of the toilette, as instruments of punishment to those spirits, who shall be careless of their charge: of punishment such as fylphs alone could undergo. Each of the delinquents,

Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins,
 Be stop'd in vials, or transfix'd with pins;
 Or plung'd in lakes of bitter washes lie;
 Or wedg'd whole ages in a bodkin's eye;
 Gums and pomatums shall his flight restrain,
 While clog'd he beats his silken wings in vain;
 Or allum-styptics with contracting pow'r,
 Shrink his thin essence like a rivell'd flow'r;
 Or, as Ixion fix'd, the wretch shall feel
 The giddy motion of the whirling mill;
 In fumes of burning chocolate shall glow,
 And tremble at the sea that froths below*.

If Virgil has merited such perpetual commendation for exalting his bees, by the majesty and magnificence of his diction, does not POPE deserve equal praises, for the pomp and lustre of his language, on so trivial a subject?

* Cant. ii. ver. 122.

THE same mastery of language, appears in the lively and elegant description of the game at Ombre; which is certainly imitated from the Scacchia of Vida, and as certainly equal to it, if not superiour. Both of them have elevated and enlivened their subjects, by such families as the epic poets use; but as Chess is a play of a far higher order than Ombre, POPE had a more difficult task than Vida, to raise this his inferior subject, into equal dignity and gracefulness. Here again our poet artfully introduces his machinery :

Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aërial guard
Descend, and sit on each important card ;
First Ariel pearch'd upon a mattadore *.

The majesty with which the kings of spades and clubs, and the knaves of diamonds and clubs are spoken of, is very amusing to the imagination : and the whole game is conducted with great art and judgment. I question whether Hoyle could have played it better than Belinda. It is finely contrived that

* Cant. iii. ver. 31.

she should be victorious; as it occasions a change of fortune in the dreadful loss she was speedily to undergo, and gives occasion to the poet to introduce a moral reflection from Virgil, which adds to the pleasantry of the story. In one of the passages where POPE has copied Vida, he has lost the propriety of the original, which arises from the different colours of the *men*, at chess.

Thus, when dispers'd a routed army runs, &c *.

Non aliter, campis legio se buxea utrinque
Composuit, duplici digestis ordine turmis,
Adversisque ambæ fulgere coloribus alæ;
Quam Gallorum acies, Alpino frigore lactea
Corpora, si tendant albis in prælia signis,
Auroræ populos contra, et Phaethonte perustos
Infano Æthiopas, et nigri Memnonis alas †.

To this scene succeeds the tea-table. It is, doubtless, as hard to make a coffee-pot shine in poetry as a plough: yet POPE has succeeded in giving elegance to so familiar an object, as well as Virgil. The guardian spirits are again active, and importantly employed;

* Cant. iii. ver. 81. † Vidæ Scacchia Ludus, ver. 74, &c.
Strait

Strait hover round the fair her airy band * ;
 Some, as she sipp'd, the fuming liquor fann'd.

Then follows an instance of affiduity fancied
 with great delicacy ;

Some o'er her lap their careful plumes display'd,
 Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.

But nothing can excell the behaviour of the
 sylphs, and their wakeful sollicitude for their
 charge, when the danger grows more immi-
 nent, and the catastrophe approaches.

Swift to the Lock a thousand sprites repair.

The methods by which they endeavoured to
 preserve her from the intended mischief, are
 such only as could be executed by a sylph ;
 and have therefore an admirable propriety, as
 well as the utmost elegance.

A thousand wings by turns blow back the hair † ;
 And thrice they TWITCH'D the diamond in her ear,
 Thrice she look'd back, and thrice the foe drew near.

Still farther to heighten the piece, and
 to preserve the characters of his machines

* Cant. iii. ver. 113.

† Cant. iii. ver. 156.

to the last, just when the fatal * forfex was spread,

Ev'n then, before the fatal engine clos'd †,
A wretched sylph too fondly interpos'd; —
Fate urg'd the sheers, and cut the sylph in twain,
(But airy substance soon unites again.) —

Which last line is an admirable parody on that passage of Milton, which, perhaps oddly enough, describes Satan wounded:

The griding sword, with discontinuous wound,
Pass'd through him; but th' ethereal substance clos'd,
Not long divisible ‡. — — — —

The parodies are some of the most exquisite parts of this poem. That which follows from the “Dum juga montis aper,” of Virgil, contains some of the most artful strokes of satire, and the most poignant ridicule imaginable.

While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,
Or in a coach and fix the British fair,

* Observe the many periphrases, and uncommon appellations, POPE has used for *Scissars*, which would sound too vulgar,—“Fatal Engine,—“Forfex,—“Sheers,—“Meeting Points, &c.”

† Cant. iii. ver 153.

‡ Paradise Lost, book vi. ver. 330.

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As long as Atalantis shall be read,
 Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed,
 While visits shall be paid on solemn days,
 When numerous wax-lights in bright order blaze,
 While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,
 So long my honour, name and praise, shall live *.

THE introduction of frequent parodies on serious and solemn passages of Homer and Virgil, give much life and spirit to heroic poetry. “ Tu dors, Prelat ? tu dors ? ” in Boileau, is the “ *Eυδεις Αλγειωνιε* ” of Homer, and is full of humour. The wife of the barber, talks in the language of Dido in her expostulations to her Æneas, at the beginning of the second canto of the *Lutrin*. POPE's parodies of the speech of Sarpedon in Homer †, and of the description of Achilles's scepter ‡, together with the scales of Jupiter from Homer, Virgil, and Milton §, are judiciously introduced in their several places ; are perhaps superiour to those Boileau or Garth have used, and are worked up with peculiar

* Cant. iii. ver. 165.

† Cant. iv. ver. 133.

‡ Cant. v. ver. 9.

§ Cant. v. ver. 72.

pleasantry.

pleasantry. The mind of the reader is engaged by novelty, when it so unexpectedly finds a thought or object it had been accustomed to survey in another form, suddenly arrayed in a ridiculous garb. A mixture of comic and ridiculous images, with serious and important ones, is also no small beauty to this species of poetry. As in the following passages, where real and imaginary distresses are coupled together.

Not youthful kings in battle seiz'd alive,
 Not scornful virgins who their charms survive,
 Not ardent lovers robb'd of all their blifs,
 Not ancient ladies when refus'd a kiss,
 Not tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,

Nay, to carry the climax still higher,

Not Cynthia when her manteau's pinn'd awry,
 E'er felt such rage resentment and despair.

This is much superiour to a similar passage in the Dispensary, which POPE might have in his eye;

At this the victors own such ecstasies †
 As Memphian priests if their Osiris sneeze;

* Cant. iv. ver. 3.

† Cant. v. ad calc.

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Or champions with Olympic clangor fir'd,
 Or simpering prudes with spritely Nantz inspir'd,
 Or Sultans rais'd from dungeons to a crown,
 Or fasting zealots when the sermon's done.

These objects have no reference to Garth's subject, as almost all of POPE's have, in the passage in question, where some female foible is glanced at. In this same canto, the cave of SPLEEN, the pictures of her attendants, ILL-NATURE and AFFECTATION, the effects of the vapour that hung over her palace, the imaginary diseases she occasions, the * speech of Umbriel, a gnome, to this malignant deity, the vial of female sorrows, the speech of Thalestris to aggravate the misfortune, the breaking the vial with its direful effects, and

* Especially when he adjures the goddess by an account of his services, Cant. iv. ver. 72.

If e'er with airy horns I planted heads,
 Or rumpled petticoats, or tumbled beds,
 Or caus'd suspicion where no soul was rude,
 Or discomposed the head-dress of a prude,
 Or e'er to costly lapdog gave disease——
 Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin,
 That single act gives half the world the spleen.

Nothing can equal this beautiful panegyric, but the satirical touches that go before.

the

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the speech of the disconsolate Belinda; all these circumstances are poetically imagined, and are far superiour to any of Boileau and Garth. How much in character is it for Belinda to mark a very dismal and solitary situation, by wishing to be conveyed,

Where the guilt chariot never marks the way,
Where none learn Ombre, none e'er taste Bohea *!

Nothing is more common in the poets than to introduce omens as preceding some important and dreadful event. Virgil has nobly described those that preceded the death of Dido. The rape of Belinda's Lock must necessarily also be attended with alarming prodigies. With what exquisite satire are they enumerated!

Thrice from my trembling hand the patch-box fell;
The tottering china shook without a wind †.

And still more to aggravate the direfulness of the impending evil,

Nay Fate mute, and Shock was most unkind!

* Cant. iv. ver. 156.

† Ibid. ver. 161.

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THE chief subject of the fifth and last canto, is the battle that ensues, and the endeavours of the ladies to recover the hair. This battle is described, as it ought to be, in very lofty and pompous terms : a game of romps was never so well dignified before. The weapons made use of are the most proper imaginable : the lightening of the ladies eyes, intolerable frowns, a pinch of snuff, and a bodkin. The machinery is not forgot :

Triumphant Umbriel on a sconce's height,
Clapp'd his glad wings, and fate to view the fight *.

Again, when the snuff is given to the baron,

The gnomes direct, to ev'ry atom just,
The pungent grains of titillating dust †.

Boileau and Garth have also each of them enlivened their pieces with a mock-fight. But Boileau has laid the scene of his action in a bookseller's shop ; where the combatants happen to encounter each other by chance. This conduct is a little inartificial ; but has

* Cant. v. ver. 53.

† Ibid. ver. 85.

given

given the satyrift an opportunity of indulging his ruling paffion, the expofing the bad poets, with which France at that time abounded. Swift's Battle of the Books, at the end of the Tale of a Tub, is evidently taken from this * battle of Boileau, which is excellent in its kind. The fight of the phyficians, in the Dispensary, is one of its moft fhining parts. There is a vaft deal of propriety, as well as pleafantry, in the weapons Garth has given to his warriours. They are armed, much in character, with cauftics, emetics, and cathartics; with buckthorn, and fteel-pills; with fyringes, bed-pans and urinals. The execution is exactly proportioned to the deadlinefs of fuch irrefiftible weapons; and the wounds inflicted, are fuitable to the nature of each different inftrument, faid to inflict them†.

WE are now arrived at the grand catastrophe of the poem; the invaluable Lock which is fo eagerly fought, is irrecoverably loft! And here our poet has made a judicious

* Cant. v.

† Ibid.

use of that celebrated fiction of Ariosto ; that all things lost on earth are treasured in the moon. How such a fiction can have place in an epic poem, it becomes the defenders of this extravagant and lawless rhapsodist to justify ; but in a comic one, it appears with grace and consistency. The whole passage in Ariosto is full of wit and satire ; for wit and satire were the chief and characteristic excellencies of Ariosto *. In this repository

* If this be thought too degrading a criticism on this justly celebrated Italian, I am ready to adopt the following opinion of a writer of taste and penetration :

“ Ariosto pleases ; but not by his monstrous and improbable fictions, by his bizarre mixture of the serious and comic styles, by the want of coherence in his stories, or by the continual interruptions in his narration. He charms by the force and clearness of his expression, by the readiness and variety of his inventions, and by his natural pictures of the passions, especially those of the GAY and AMOROUS kind. And however his faults may diminish our satisfaction, they are not able entirely to destroy it. Did our pleasure really arise from these parts of his poem, which we denominate faults, this would be no objection to criticism in general : it would only be an objection to those particular rules of criticism, which would establish such circumstances to be faults, and would represent them as universally blameable. If they are found to please, they cannot be faults ; let the pleasure which they produce, be ever so unexpected and unaccountable.” Hume’s *FOUR DISSERTATIONS*. Diss. iv. p. 212. London, 1757.

in

in the lunar sphere, says the SPRIGHTLY Italian, were to be found,

Le lachrime, e i sospiri de gli amanti,
L'inutil' tempo, che si perde a gioco,
E l'otio lungo d'huomini ignoranti,
Vani disegni, che non han mai loco,
I vani desiderii sono tanti,
Che la piu parte ingombra di quel loco,
Cio che in summa qua giu perdesti mai,
La su saltando ritrovar potrai *.

It is very remarkable, that the poet had the boldness to place among these imaginary treasures, the famous deed of gift of Constantine to Pope Silvester, " If, says he, I may be allowed to say this,"

Questo era il dono (se pero dir lece)
Che Constantino al buon Silvestre fece.

It may be observed in general, to the honour of the poets, both ancient and modern, that they have ever been some of the first, who have detected and opposed the false claims, and mischievous usurpations, of superstition

* Orlando Furioso. Cant. xxxiv.

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and slavery. Nor can this be wondered at, since these two are the greatest enemies, not only to all true happiness, but to all true genius.

THE denouement, as a pedantic disciple of Boffu would call it, of this poem, is well conducted. What is become of this important LOCK OF HAIR? It is made a constellation with that of Berenice, so celebrated by Callimachus. As it rises to heaven,

The sylphs behold it kindling as it flies *,
And pleas'd pursue its progress through the skies.

One cannot sufficiently applaud the art of the poet, in constantly keeping in the reader's view, the machinery of the poem, to the very last. Even when the Lock is transformed, the sylphs, who had so carefully guarded it, are here once again artfully mentioned, as finally rejoicing in its honourable transformation.

IN reading the *Lutrin*, I have always been struck with the impropriety of so serious

* Cant. v. ver. 130.

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a conclusion, as Boileau has given to so ludicrous a poem. PIETY and JUSTICE are beings rather too awful, to have any concern in the celebrated desk. They appear as much out of place and season, as would the archbishop of Paris in his pontifical robes, in an harlequin entertainment.

POPE does not desert his favorite Lock, even after it becomes a constellation; and the uses he assigns to it are indeed admirable, and have a reference to the subject of the poem.

This the beau monde shall from the mall survey *,
And hail with music it's propitious ray;
This the blest lover shall for *Venus* take,
And send up prayers from Rosamunda's lake;
This Partridge soon shall view in cloudless skies,
When next he looks through Galileo's eyes;
And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom,
The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.

This is at once, DULCE LOQUI, and RIDERE
DECORUM.

* Cant. v. ver. 133.

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UPON the whole, I hope it will not be thought an exaggerated panegyric to say, that the **RAPE OF THE LOCK**, is the **BEST SATIRE** extant; that it contains the truest and liveliest picture of modern life; and that the subject is of a more elegant nature, as well as more artfully conducted, than that of any other heroi-comic poem. POPE here appears in the light of a man of gallantry, and of a thorough knowledge of the world; and indeed, he had nothing, in his carriage and deportment, of that affected singularity, which has induced some men of genius to despise, and depart from, the established rules of politeness and civil life. For all poets have not practiced the sober and rational advice of Boileau.

Que les vers ne soient pas votre eternal emploi :
 Cultivez vos amis, foyez homme de foi.
 C'est peu d'être agréable et charmant dans un livre;
 Il fait savoir encore, et converser, et vivre *.

OUR nation can boast also, of having produced one or two more poems of the bur-

* L' Art Poétique. Chant. iv.

lesque

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lesque kind, that are excellent ; particularly the **SPLENDID SHILLING**, that admirable copy of the solemn irony of Cervantes ; who is the father and unrivalled model of the true mock-heroic : and the **MUSCIPULA**, written with the purity of Virgil, whom the author so perfectly understood, and with the pleasantry of Lucian : to which I cannot forbear adding, the **SCRIBLERIAD** of Mr. Cambridge *, the **MACHINÆ GESTICULANTES** of Addison, the **HOBBINOL** of Somerville, and the **TRIVIA** of Gay.

* This learned and ingenious writer hath made a new remark, in his preface, worth examination and attention. He says, that in first reading the *four* celebrated mock-heroic poems, he perceived they had all some radical defect. That at last he found by a diligent perusal of Don Quixote, that *Pro, riety* was the fundamental excellence of that Work. That all the *Marvellous* was reconcileable to *Probability*, as the author led his hero into *that* species of absurdity only, which it was *natural* for an imagination heated with the continual reading of books of chivalry to fall into. That the want of attention to this was the fundamental error of those poems. For with what **PROPRIETY** do *Churchmen, Physicians, Beaux, and Belles, or Bookfellers*, in the *Lutrin, Dispensary, Rape of the Lock, and Dunciad*, address themselves to heathen Gods, offer sacrifices, consult oracles, or talk the language of Homer, and of the heroes of antiquity ?

IF some of the most candid among the French critics begin to acknowledge, that they have produced nothing in point of **SUBLIMITY** and **MAJESTY** equal to the **Paradise Lost**, we may also venture to affirm, that in point of **DELICACY**, **ELEGANCE**, and fine-turned **RAILLERY**, on which they have so much valued themselves, they have produced nothing equal to the **RAPE OF THE LOCK**. It is in this composition, **POPE** principally appears a **POET** ; in which he has displayed more imagination than in all his other works taken together. It should however be remembered, that he was not the **FIRST** former and creator of those beautiful machines, the sylphs ; on which his claim to imagination is chiefly founded. He found them existing ready to his hand ; but has, indeed, employed them with singular judgment and artifice.

S E C T.

S E C T. V.

Of The ELEGY to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady, The PROLOGUE to Cato, and The EPILOGUE to Jane Shore.

THE ELEGY to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady, which is next to be spoken of, as it came from the heart, is very tender and pathetic; more so, I think, than any other copy of verses of our author. We are unacquainted with the whole of her history, and with that series of misfortunes, which seems to have drawn on the melancholy catastrophe, alluded to in the beginning of this ELEGY. She is said to be the same person, to whom the Duke of Buckingham has addressed some lines, viz. "To a Lady designing to retire into a Monastery." This design is also hinted at in POPE's Letters *, where he says in a letter addressed, I presume, to this very person, "If you are resolved, in revenge, to rob the world of so much example, as you may

* Vol. vii. p. 193. Octavo Edition.

afford

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afford it, I believe your design will be vain : for even, in a monastery, your devotions cannot carry you so far towards the next world, as to make this lose sight of you : but you will be like a star, that, while it is fixed in heaven, shines over all the earth. Wheresoever providence shall dispose of the most valuable thing I know, I shall ever follow you with my sincerest wishes ; and my best thoughts will be perpetually waiting upon you, when you never hear of me or them. Your own guardian angels cannot be more constant, nor more silent."

THIS ELEGY opens with a striking abruptness, and a strong image ; the poet fancies he beholds suddenly the phantom of his murdered friend ;

What beck'ning ghost along the moonlight shade,
Invites my steps, and points to yonder glade ?
'Tis she !——but why that bleeding bosom gor'd,
Why dimly gleams the visionary sword ?

This question alarms the reader ; and puts one in mind of that lively and affecting image
in

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in the prophecy of Ifaiah, so vigorously conceived, that it places the object full in one's eyes. "Who is this that cometh from "Edom? With dyed garments from Bofra*?" Akenfide has begun one of his odes in the like manner ;

O fly ! 'tis dire SUSPICION's mein ;
And meditating plagues unseen,
The forc'refs hither bends !
Behold her torch in gall imbru'd ;
Behold, her garments drop with blood
Of lovers and of friends !

The execrations on the cruelties of this lady's relations, which had driven her to this deplorable extremity, are very spirited and forcible ; especially where the poet fays emphatically,

Thus, if eternal juftice rules the ball,
Thus fhall your wives, and thus your children fall.

He describes afterwards the defolation of this family, by the following lively circumftance and profopopœia :

* Chap. lxiii. ver. 1.

I i

There

There passengers shall stand, and pointing say,
 (While the long funerals blacken all the way)
 Lo ! these were they, whose souls the furies steel'd,
 And curst with hearts unknowing how to yield !
 So perish all, whose breast ne'er learn'd to glow
 For others good, or melt at others woe.

The incident of her dying in a country remote from her relations and acquaintance, is touched with great tenderness, and introduced with propriety, to aggravate and heighten her lamentable fate ;

No friend's complaint, no kind domestic tear *,
 Pleas'd thy pale ghost, or grac'd thy mournful bier ;
 By foreign hands thy dying eyes were clos'd,
 By foreign hands thy decent limbs compos'd,
 By foreign hands thy humble grave adorn'd,
 By strangers honour'd, and by strangers mourn'd !

The force of the repetition of the significant epithet *foreign*, need not be pointed out to any reader of sensibility. The right of sepulture of which she was deprived, from the

* Something like that pathetic stroke in the Philoctetes of Sophocles, who, among other heavy circumstances of distress, is said not to have near him, any *συνίτροφον οἶμα*. Ver. 171.—
 Not to be translated !

manner

manner of her death, is glanced at with great delicacy ; nay, and a very poetical use is made of it.

What though no sacred earth allow thee room,
Nor hallow'd dirge be mutter'd o'er thy tomb ?
Yet shall thy grave with rising flowers be drest,
And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast ;
There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,
There the first roses of the year shall blow.

IF this ELEGY be so excellent, it may be ascribed to this cause ; that the occasion of it was real ; for it is certainly an indisputable maxim, “ That nature is more powerful than fancy ; that we can always feel more than we can imagine ; and that the most artful fiction must give way to truth.” When Polus the celebrated actor, once affected his audience with more than ordinary emotions, it was “ *luctû et lamentis veris*,” by bursting out into real cries and tears ; for in personating Electra weeping over the supposed urn of her brother Orestes, he held in his hand the real ashes of his own son lately dead *. Events that have

* Aul. Gell. Noct. Attic. Lib. vii. Cap. v.

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actually happened are, after all, the properest subjects for poetry. The best eclogue of Virgil *, the best ode of Horace †, are founded on real incidents. If we briefly cast our eyes over the most interesting and affecting stories, ancient or modern, we shall find that they are such, as however adorned and a little diversified, are yet grounded on true history, and on real matters of fact. Such, for instance, among the ancients, are the stories, of Joseph, of Oedipus, the Trojan war and its consequences, of Virginia and the Horatii; such, among the moderns, are the stories of king Lear, the Cid, Romeo and Juliet, and Oronooko. The series of events contained in these stories, seem far to surpass the utmost powers of human imagination. In the best-conducted fiction, some mark of improbability and incoherence will still appear.

I SHALL only add to these, a tale literally true, which the admirable DANTE has introduced in his *Inferno*, and which is not suffi-

* The First.

† Ode xiii. lib. ii.

ciently

ciently known ; I cannot recollect any passage, in any writer whatever, so truly pathetic. Ugolino, a Florentine Count, is giving the description of his being imprisoned with his children by the archbishop Ruggieri. “ The hour approached when we expected to have something brought us to eat. But instead of seeing any food appear, * *I heard the doors of that horrible dungeon more closely barred.* I beheld my little children *in silence*, and could not weep. My heart was petrified ! The little wretches wept, and my dear Anselm said ; *Tu guardi sì, padre : che hai ? father you look on us ! what ails you ?* I could neither weep nor answer, and continued swallowed up in silent agony, all that day, and the following night, even till the dawn of day. As soon as a glimmering ray darted through the doleful prison, that I could view *again those four faces, in which my own image was impressed, I gnawed both my hands,* with grief and rage.

* It was thought not improper to distinguish the more moving passages by Italics. Mr. Baretti's just translation is here used. See his DISSERTATION on the Italian Poets.

My children believing I did this through eagerness to eat, raising themselves suddenly up, said to me, *My father ! our torments would be less, if you would allay the rage of your hunger upon us.* I restrained myself, that I might not encrease their misery. *We were all mute that day, and the following.* Quel di, e l' altro, stemmo tutti muti. The fourth day being come, Gaddo falling extended at my feet, cried ; *Padre mio, che non m' ajuti ! My father, why do you not help me ?* and died. The other three expired one after the other between the fifth and sixth day, famished as thou seest me now ! And I, *being seized with blindness,* began to go *groping upon them with my hands and feet :* and continued calling them by their *names three days* after they were dead. *E tre dì li chiamai poichè fur morti :* then *hunger vanquished my grief !*"

If this inimitable description had been found in Homer, the Greek tragedies, or Virgil, how many commentaries and panegyrics would it have given rise to ? What shall

shall we say, or think, of the genius able to produce it? There are many of the same nature; and perhaps the *Inferno* of Dante is the next composition to the *Iliad*, in point of originality and sublimity. And with regard to the Pathetic, let this tale stand a testimony of his abilities: for my own part, I truly believe it was never carried to a greater height. It is remarkable, that Chaucer appears to have been particularly struck with this tale in Dante, having highly commended this, “grete poete of Italie,” for this narration; with a summary of which he concludes the *Monke’s Tale* *.

THE PROLOGUE to *Addison’s Tragedy of Cato*, is superior to any prologue of Dryden;

* Milton was particularly fond of this writer. The following passage is curious, and has not been taken notice of by the late writers of his life: “Ego certè istis utrisque linguis non extremis tantummodò labris madidus; sed siquis alius, quantum per annos licuit, poculis majoribus prolutus, possum tamen nunquam ad illum DANTEM, & Petrarcham, aliosque vestros compluscultos, libenter & cupidè comessatum ire. Nec me tam ipsæ Athenæ Atticæ cum illo suo pellucido Ilisso, nec illa vetus Roma suâ Tiberis ripâ retinere valuerunt, quin sæpe Arnum vestrum, & Fæfulanos illos Colles invisere amem.” Milton. *EPISTOL. Epist. viii. B. Bommathæo Florentino.*

who,

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who, notwithstanding, is so justly celebrated for this species of writing. The prologues of Dryden are satyrical and facetious; this of POPE is solemn and sublime, as the subject required. Those of Dryden contain general topics of criticism and wit, and may precede any play whatsoever, even tragedy or comedy. This of POPE is particular, and appropriated to the tragedy alone, which it was designed to introduce. The most striking images and allusions it contains, are taken, with judgment, from some passages in the life of Cato himself. Such is that fine stroke, more lofty than any thing in the tragedy itself, where the poet says, that when Cæsar amid the pomp and magnificence of a triumph,

Shew'd Rome her Cato's figure drawn in state;
As her dead father's reverend image past,
The pomp was darken'd and the day o'ercast;
The triumph ceas'd.—Tears gush'd from ev'ry eye.
The world's great victor pass'd unheeded by;
Her last good man dejected Rome ador'd,
And honour'd Cæsar's less than Cato's sword.

Such,

Such, again, is the happy allusion to an old story mentioned in Martial, of this sage going into the theatre, and immediately coming out of it again :

Such plays alone should win a British ear,
As Cato's self had not disdain'd to hear.

From which he draws an artful panegyric, on the purity and excellence of the play he was celebrating.

WITH respect to sprightly turns and poignancy of wit, the prologues of Dryden have not been equalled. Many, and indeed the most excellent of them, were written on occasion of the players going to Oxford; a custom, for the neglect of which no good reason can be assigned; and which was introduced, by that polite scholar, and sensible governor, Dr. Ralph Bathurst, Dean of Wells, and President of Trinity College, while he was Vice-chancellor of that University*. At this time Dryden was so famous for his prologues,

* See the Life, &c. of BATHURST, lately published.

that no piece was relished, nor would the theatres *scarcely* venture to produce it, if it wanted this fashionable ornament. To this purpose, an anecdote is recorded of Southerne; who, on bringing his first play on the stage, did not fail to bespeak a prologue of the artist in vogue. The usual price had been four guineas. In the present case, Dryden insisted that he must have six for his work; "which, said the mercantile bard, is out of no disrespect to you, young man; but the players have had my goods too cheap."

THE tragedy of Cato itself, is a glaring instance of the force of party *; so sententious and declamatory a drama would never have met with such rapid and amazing success, if every line and sentiment had not been particularly tortured,

* When Addison spoke of the secretary of state at that time, he always called him, in the language of Shakespeare, "*That canker'd Bolingbroke*." Notwithstanding this, Addison assured POPE, he did not bring his tragedy on the stage with any party views; nay, desired POPE to carry the poem to the Lords Oxford and Bolingbroke, for their perusal. The play, however, was always considered as a warning to the people, that liberty
was

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tortured, and applied to recent events, and the reigning disputes of the times. The purity and energy of the diction, and the loftiness of the sentiments, copied in a great measure from Lucan, Tacitus, and Seneca the philosopher, merit approbation. But I have always thought, that those pompous Roman sentiments are not so difficult to be produced, as is vulgarly imagined; and which, indeed, dazzle only the vulgar. A stroke of nature is, in my opinion, worth a hundred such thoughts, as,

When vice prevails, and impious men bear sway,
The post of honour is a private station.

CATO is a fine dialogue on liberty, and the love of one's country; but considered as a

was in danger during that tory ministry. To obviate the strong impressions, that so popular a performance might make on the minds of the audience, Lord Bolingbroke, in the midst of their violent applauses, sent for Booth, who played Cato, one night, into his box, between the acts, and presented him with fifty guineas; in acknowledgment, as he expressed it with great address, for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator.

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dramatic performance, nay as a model of a just tragedy, as some have affectedly represented it, it must be owned to want, **ACTION** and **PATHOS**; the two hinges, I presume, on which a just tragedy ought necessarily to turn, and without which it cannot subsist. It wants also **CHARACTER**, although that be not essentially necessary to a tragedy as **ACTION**. Syphax, indeed, in his * interview with Juba, bears some marks of a rough African: the speeches of the rest may be transferred to any of the personages concerned. The simile drawn from Mount Atlas, and the description of the Numidian traveller smothered in the desert, are indeed in character, but sufficiently obvious. How Addison could fall into the false and unnatural custom of ending his three first acts with similes, is amazing in so chaste and correct a writer. The loves of Juba and Marcia, of Portius and Lucia, are vicious and insipid episodes, debase the dignity, and destroy the unity, of the fable.

* Act ii. Scene v.

ONE

ONE would imagine, from the practice of our modern play-wrights, that love was the only passion, capable of producing any great calamities in human life : for this passion has engrossed, and been impertinently introduced into, all subjects *. In the *Cinna* of Corneille, which the prince of Condé called “ the Breviary of kings,” Maximus whines like a shepherd in the *Pastor Fido*, even in the midst of profound political reflections, that excel those of Tacitus and Machiavel ; and while the most important event, that could happen to the empire of the world, was debating. In his imitation of the *Orestes* of Sophocles, Cre-

* When the resolution of Medea to kill her children, is almost disarmed and destroyed by looking at them, and by their smiling upon her, she breaks out ;

Φευ, φευ' τι προσδερκεσθαι μ' ὀμμασιν, τινα ;
Τι προσγελαῖ τον πανυγαλον γελων ;
Αι, αν—τι δρασω ;—καρδια γαρ οιχιλαι.

Heu, heu ! cur me oculis aspicitis, liberi ?

Cur arridetis hoc extremo risu ?

Heu, heu ! quid faciam ? cor enim mihi disperit !

Euripid. *Medea*. Ver. 1041.

No sentiments of the Lover can be so tender, and so deeply touching, as these of the Mother.

billon

billon has introduced a frigid love-intrigue. Achilles must be in love in the Iphigenia of Racine; and the rough Mithridates must be involved in this universal passion. A passion however it is, that will always shine upon the stage, where it is introduced as the chief subject, but not subordinate and secondary *. Thus, perhaps, there cannot be finer subjects for a drama, than Phædra, Romeo, Othello, and Monimia. The whole distress in these pieces arises *singly* from this unfortunate passion, carried to an extreme †. The GREATER passions were the constant subjects of the Grecian; the TENDERER passions of the French and English theatres. Terror reigned in the

* L'Amour furieux, criminel, malheureux, suivi de remords, arrache de nobles larmes. Point de milieu : il faut, ou que l'amour domine en tiran, ou qu'il ne paroisse pas.

Oeuvres de Voltaire. Tom xii. pag. 153.

I have just been told, that CHATEAUBRUN also very lately made poor Philoctetes in love, in his Desart Island.

† The introduction of female actresses on the modern stage, together with that importance which the ladies in these latter ages have justly gained, in comparison to what the ancients allowed them, are the two great reasons, among others, of the prevalence of these tender tales. The ladies of Athens, had not interest enough to damn a piece of Sophocles or Euripides.

former ;

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former ; pity occupies the latter. The moderns may yet boast of some pieces, that are not emasculated with this epidemical effeminacy. Racine was at last convinced of its impropriety, and gave the public his *Athaliah* ; in which were no parts, commonly called by the French *d' amoureux et de l' amoureuse*, which parts were always given to their two capital actors. The *Merope* and *Orestes* of Voltaire, are likewise free from any ill-placed tenderness, and romantic gallantry. For which he has merited the praises of the learned father Tournemine, in a letter to his friend father Brumoy *. But *LEAR* and *MACBETH* are also striking instances what interesting tragedies may be written, without having recourse to a love-story. It is pity, that the tragedy of *Cato*, in which all the rules of the drama, as far as the mechanism of writing reaches, are observed, is not exact with respect to the unity of time. There was no occasion to extend the time of the fable longer than the mere representation takes up ; all might have

* *Les Oeuvres de Voltaire*, tom. viii. 38.

passed

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passed in the compass of three hours from the morning, with a description of which the play opens; if the poet, in the fourth scene of the fifth act, had not talked of the *setting* sun playing on the armour of the soldiers.

HAVING been imperceptibly led into this little criticism on the tragedy of Cato, I beg leave to speak a few words on some other of Addison's pieces. The * first of his poems addressed to Dryden, Sir John Somers, and king William, are languid, prosaic, and void of any poetical imagery or spirit. The Letter from Italy, is by no means equal to a subject fruitful of genuine poetry, and which might have warmed the most cold and correct imagination. One would have expected, a young traveller in the height of his genius and judgment, would have broke out into some strokes of enthusiasm. With what flatness and unfeelingness has he spoken of statu-

* Tickell has ridiculously marked the author's age to be but twenty-two and twenty-seven; as if these verses were extraordinary efforts at that age! To these however Addison owed his introduction at court, and his acquaintance with that polite patron Lord Somers.

ary

ary and painting ! Raphaël never received a more flegmatic eulogy. The slavery and superstition of the present Romans, are well touched upon towards the conclusion ; but I will venture to name a little piece on a parallel subject, that greatly excells this celebrated Letter ; and in which are as much lively and original imagery, strong painting, and manly sentiments of freedom, as I have ever read in our language. It is a copy of verses written at Virgil's Tomb, and printed in Dodsley's * Miscellanies.

THAT there are many well-wrought descriptions, and even pathetic strokes, in the Campaign, it would be stupidity and malignity to deny. But surely the regular march which the poet has observed from one town to another, as if he had been a commissary of the army, cannot well be excused. There is a passage in Boileau, so remarkably opposite to this fault of Addison, that one would almost be tempted to think he had the Campaign in

* Vol. IV. pag. 114.

his eye, when he wrote it, if the time would admit † it.

Loin ces rimeurs craintifs, dont l'esprit phlegmatique
 Garde dans ses fureurs un ordre didactique ;
 Qui chantant d'un heros les progrès éclatans,
MAIGRES HISTORIENS, SUIVRONT L'ORDRE DES
TEMPS ;
 Ils n'osent un moment prendre un sujet de vûe,
 Pour prendre Dole, il faut que Lille soit rendüe ;
 Et que leur vers exact, ainsi que Mezerai,
 Ait fait déjà tomber—les remparts de * Coutrai.

The most spirited verses Addison has written, are, an Imitation of the third ode of the third book of Horace, which is indeed performed with energy and vigour ; and his compliment to Kneller, on the picture of king George the first. The occasion of this last poem is peculiarly happy ; for among the works of Phidias which he enumerates, he selects such statues as exactly mark, and characterise, the last six British kings and queens.

* L' Art poetique. Ch. ii.

† But the Art of Poetry was written in the year 1672, many years before the Campaign. Addison might have profited by this rule of his acquaintance, for whom he had a great respect.

Great

* Great Pan who wont to chase the fair,
 And lov'd the spreading OAK, was there;
 Old Saturn too, with upcast eyes,
 Beheld his ABDICATED skies;
 And mighty Mars for war renown'd,
 In adamantinè armor frown'd:
 By him the childless goddess rose,
 Minerva, studious to compose
 Her twisted threads; the web she strung,
 And o'er a loom of marble hung;
 Thetis the troubled ocean's queen,
 Match'd with a MORTAL, next was seen,
 Reclining on a funeral urn,
 Her short-liv'd darling son to mourn.
 The last was HE, whose thunder flew
 The Titan race, a rebel crew,
 That from a HUNDRED HILLS ally'd,
 In impious league their king defy'd.

There is scarcely, I believe, any instance, where mythology has been applied with so much delicacy and dexterity, and has been contrived to answer in its application, so mi-

* CHALES II. famous for his lewdness; the allusion to his being concealed in the oak is artful. JAMES II. WILLIAM III. Queen MARY, who had no heirs, and was a great work-woman. Queen ANNE married to the PRINCE of Denmark, who lost the D. of Gloucester in his youth. George I. who conquered the Highland rebels at Preston, 1715.

nately, exactly, and in so many corresponding circumstances.—

WHATEVER censures we have here, too boldly, perhaps, ventured to deliver on the *professed* poetry of Addison, yet must we candidly own, that in various parts of his *professays*, are to be found many strokes of genuine and sublime poetry ; many marks of a vigorous and exuberant imagination. Particularly, in the noble allegory of Pain and Pleasure, the Vision of Mirza, the story of Maraton and Yaratilda, of Constantia and Theodosius, and the beautiful eastern tale of Abdallah and Balfora ; and many others : together with several strokes in the Essay on the pleasures of imagination. It has been the lot of many great names, not to have been able to express themselves with beauty and propriety in the fetters of verse, in their respective languages ; who have yet manifested the force, fertility, and creative power of a most poetic genius, in prose *. This was the case of Plato, of

* In some of the eastern stories, lately published in the *ADVENTURER*, a vast and noble invention is displayed ; and this
Lucian,

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Lucian, of Fenelon, of Sir Philip Sidney, and of Dr. T. Burnet, who in his Theory of the Earth, has displayed an imagination, very nearly equal to that of Milton.

Mænia mundi

Difcedunt ! totum video per Inane geri res !

After all, the chief and characteristical excellency of Addison, was his HUMOUR ; for in humour no mortal has excelled him except Moliere. Witness the character of Sir Roger de Coverly, so original, so natural, and so inviolably preserved ; † particularly, in the month, which the Spectator spends at his hall in the country. Witness also the Drummer, that excellent and neglected comedy, that just picture of life and real manners, where the poet never speaks in his own person, or

too by an author, that, I have never heard, has written any considerable verses. See, particularly, the story of Amurath, N^o. 20, of Nouraddin and Amana, N^o. 73, and of Carazan. N^o. 132, by Mr. Hawkefworth.

† Vol. II. during the month of July. See the characters of Will. Wimble, Moll White, and the justices of the quorum, p. 200. & seq. And Vol. 5. Sir Roger at Westminster Abby, 329. and particularly at the tragedy of the Distrest Mother with the Spectator.

totally

totally drops or forgets a character, for the sake of introducing a brilliant simile, or acute remark : where no train is laid for wit ; no JEREMYS, or BENS, are suffer'd to appear.

THE EPILOGUE to *Jane Shore*, is the last piece that belongs to this Section ; the title of which by this time the reader may have possibly forgot. It is written with the air of gallantry and raillery, which, by a strange perversion of taste, the audience expects in all epilogues to the most serious and pathetic pieces. To recommend cuckoldom and palliate adultery, is their usual intent. I wonder Mrs. Oldfield was not suffered to speak it ; for it is superiour to that which was used on the occasion. In this taste Garrick has written some, that abound in spirit and drollery. Rowe's genius * was rather delicate and soft,

* There are however some images in Rowe strongly painted, such, particularly, as the following, which is worthy of Spenser ; speaking of the Tower.

Methinks SUSPICION and DISTRUST dwell here,
Staring with meagre forms thro' grated windows.

Lady Jane Grey, Act iii. Sc. ii.

than

than strong and pathetic; his compositions soothe us with a tranquil and tender sort of complacency, rather than cleave the heart with pangs of commiseration. His distresses are entirely founded on the passion of love. His diction is extremely elegant and chaste, and his versification highly melodious. His plays are declamations rather than dialogues, and his characters are general, and undistinguished from each other. Such a furious character as that of Bajazet, is easily drawn; and, let me add, easily acted. There is a want of unity in the fable of Tamerlane. The death's head, dead body, and stage hung in mourning, in the Fair Penitent, are artificial and mechanical methods of affecting an audience. In a word, his plays are musical and pleasing poems, but inactive and unmoving tragedies. This of Jane Shore is, I think, the most interesting and affecting of any he has given us: but probability is sadly violated in it by the neglect of the unity of time. For a person to be supposed to be starved, during the representation of five acts, is a striking instance

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stance of the absurdity of this violation. In this piece, as in all of Rowe, are many florid speeches utterly inconsistent with the state and situation of the distressed personages who speak them. When Shore first meets with her husband, she says,

* Art thou not risen by miracle from death?
Thy shroud is fall'n from off thee, and the grave
Was bid to give thee up, that thou might'st come,
The messenger of grace and goodness to me.—

He has then added some lines, intolerably flowery and unnatural;

Give me your drops, ye soft descending rains,
Give me your streams, ye never-ceasing springs,
That my sad eyes may still supply my duty,
And feed an everlasting flood of sorrow.

This is of a far distant strain from those tender and simple exclamations she uses, when her husband offers her some rich preserves;

————— † How can you be so good?

And again;

* Act v. Sc. iv.

† Ibid.

—Have.

—————Have you forgot
The costly string of pearl you brought me home,
And ty'd about my neck? *how could I leave you?*

She continues to gaze on him with earnestness,
and instead of eating as he entreats her, she
observes,

—————You're strangely alter'd—
Say, gentle Belmour, is he not? how pale
Your visage is become? Your eyes are hollow,—
Nay, you are wrinkled too—

To which she instantly subjoins, struck with
the idea that she herself was the unhappy
cause of this alteration;

—————Alas the day!
My wretchedness has cost you many a tear,
And many a bitter pang since last we parted.

What she answers to her husband, when he
asks her movingly,

Why dost thou fix thy dying eyes upon me
With such an earnest, such a piteous look,
As if thy heart was full of some sad meaning,
Thou couldst not speak!—

M m

Is

Is pathetic to a great degree ;

Forgive me ! *but* forgive me !

These few words far exceed the most pompous declamations of *Cato*. The interview betwixt Jane Shore and Alicia, in the middle of this act, is also very affecting : where the madness of Alicia is well painted. But of all representations of madness, that of Clementina, in the History of Sir Charles Grandison, is the most deeply interesting. I know not whether even the madness of Lear is wrought up, and expressed by so many little strokes of nature, and genuine passion. Shall I say it is pedantry to prefer and compare, the madness of Orestes in Euripides, to this of Clementina?

It is probable, that this is become the most popular and pleasing tragedy of all Rowe's works, because it is founded on our own history. I cannot forbear wishing, that our writers would more frequently search for subjects, in the annals of England, which afford many striking and pathetic events, proper for
the

the stage. We have been too long attached to Grecian and Roman stories. In truth, the DOMESTICA FACTA, are more interesting, as well as more useful: more interesting, because we all think ourselves concerned in the actions and fates of our countrymen; more useful, because the characters and manners, bid the fairest to be true and natural, when they are drawn from models with which we are exactly acquainted. The Turks, the Persians, and Americans, of our poets, are in reality distinguished from Englishmen, only by their turbans and feathers; and think, and act, as if they were born and educated within the bills of mortality. The historical plays of * Shakespeare, are always particularly grateful to the spectator, who loves to see and hear our own Harrys and Edwards, better than all the Achilleſes or

* Milton has left, in a manuscript, thirty-three subjects for tragedies, all taken from the English annals; which manuscript the curious reader may see printed in Newton's Edit. of Milton, Oct. Vol. iii. pag. 331. And in Birch's life of Milton, prefixed to his edition of Milton's prose-works, pag. 51; and in Peck's Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Milton, pag. 90.

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Cæsars, that ever existed. In the choice of a domestic story, however, much judgment and circumspection must be exerted, to select one of a proper æra ; neither of too ancient, or of too modern a date. The manners of times very ancient, we shall be apt to falsify, as those of the Greeks and Romans. And recent events, with which we are thoroughly acquainted, are deprived of the power of impressing solemnity and awe, by their notoriety and familiarity. Age softens and wears away all those disgracing and depreciating circumstances, which attend modern transactions, merely because they are modern. Lucan was much embarrassed by the proximity of the times he treated of. On this very account, as well as others, the best tragedy that could be possibly written on the murder of Charles I. would be coldly received. Racine ventured to write on a recent history, in his *Bajazet* ; but would not have attempted it, had he not thought, that the distance of his hero's country repaired, in some measure, the nearness
of

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of the time in which he lived. "Major a
longinquo reverentia."

POPE, it is said, had framed a design of writing an epic poem, on a fact recorded in our old annalists, and therefore more engaging to an Englishman; on the ARRIVAL of BRUTUS, the supposed grandson of Æneas, in our island, and the settlement of the first foundations of the British monarchy. A full scope might have been given to a vigorous imagination, to embellish a fiction drawn from the bosom of the remotest antiquity. Some tale, equally venerable and ancient, it was also the purpose of Milton * to adorn; for he says, in his
Reason

* Whether he intended, as A POET expresses it, To,

Record old ARTHUR's magic tale,
And EDWARD, fierce in fable mail;
Sing royal BRUTUS' lawless doom,
And brave BONDUCA, scourge of Rome;
Great PENDRAGON's fair-branched line,
Stern ARVIRAGE, or old LOCRINE.

THE UNION, pag. 92.

"An historical poem, says Milton, in the above-mentioned manuscript, may be founded somewhere in Alfred's reign, especially at his issuing out of Edelingsey, on the Danes, whose
actions

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Reason of church government *, "I am meditating what king or knight BEFORE THE CONQUEST might be chosen, in whom to lay the pattern of a christian hero." But shall I be pardoned for suspecting, that POPE would not have succeeded in this design; that so DIDACTIC a genius would have been deficient in that SUBLIME and PATHETIC, which are the main nerves of the epopea; that he would have given us many elegant descriptions, and many GENERAL characters, well drawn; but would have failed to set before our eyes the REALITY of these objects, and the ACTIONS of these characters: for Homer professedly draws no characters, but

actions are well like those of Ulysses." In Milton's history of England, may be seen the story of Brutus here in question: with which he seems pleased, as it suited the romantic turn of his mind. See his MANSUS,

Siquando indigenas revocabo in carmina reges,
Arthurumque etiam, &c.
Ipse ego Dardaniæ Rutupina per æquora puppes,
Dicam, & Pandrasidos regnum vetus Inogeniæ,
Brennumque, Arviragumque, &c.

And, particularly, the EPITAPHIUM DAMONIS.

* Pag. 24.

gives

gives us to collect them from the looks and behaviour of each person he introduces ; that POPE's close and constant reasoning had impaired and crushed the faculty of imagination ; that the political reflections, in this piece, would, in all probability, have been more numerous, than the affecting strokes of nature ; that it would have more resembled the HENRIADE, than the ILIAD, or even the GIERUSALEMME LIBERATA ; that it would have appeared, (if this scheme had been executed) how much, and for what reasons, the man that is skilful in painting modern life, and the most secret foibles and follies of his contemporaries, is, THEREFORE disqualified for representing the ages of heroism, and that simple life, which alone epic poetry can gracefully describe ; in a word, that this composition would have shewn more of the PHILOSOPHER than of the POET. Add to all this, that it was to have been written in rhyme ; a circumstance, sufficient of itself alone to overwhelm and extinguish all enthusiasm, and produce endless tautologies and circumlocutions.

tions. Are not these suppositions strengthened by what Dr. Warburton * has informed us, namely, that POPE in this poem intended to have treated amply, “ Of ALL that regarded civil regimen, or the science of politics; that the several forms of a republic were here to have been examined and explained; together with the several modes of religious worship, as far forth as they affect society;” than which, surely there could not have been a more improper subject for an epic poem.

It is not impertinent to observe, for the sake of those who are fond of the history of literature, and of the human mind in the progress of it, that the very first poem that appeared in France, any thing like an epic poem, was on this identical subject, of Brutus arriving in England. It was written by Master EUSTACHE, so early as in the reign of Louis the seventh, surnamed the Young, who ascended the throne in the year 1137, and who

* Vol. III.

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was the husband of the celebrated Eleonora, afterwards divorced, and married to our Henry the second. The author called it, *Le ROMAN de Brut*. Every piece of poetry was at that time denominated a romance. The Latin Language ceased to be regularly spoken in France, about the ninth century; and was succeeded by what was called the *Romance-tongue*, a mixture of the language of the Franks, and of bad Latin. The species of writing, called *Romans*, began in the tenth century, according to the opinion of the Benedictine fathers *, who have well refuted M. Fleuri and Calmet, who make it less ancient by two hundred years. The poem, or *Roman*, we are speaking of, is full of wonderful and improbable tales, and supernatural adventures, suited to the taste of so barbarous an age. It is matter of some curiosity, to see a specimen of the style of this eldest of the French poets. This is his exordium :

Qui veut ouir, qui veut scavoir,
De roi en roi, & d'hoir en hoir,

* Hist. Lit. T. 6, 7:

Qui cils furent, & d' où cils vinrent,
 Qui Angleterre primes tinrent.

We may judge, from this passage, of the state of the language. Master Eustache has been particularly careful to mark the time in which he lived and wrote, by his two concluding lines :

L' an mil cent cinquante—cinq ans
 Fit Maistre Eustache ces Romans.

I will take leave to add, that the second poem, now remaining, in the French language, was entitled, *The Romance of Alexander the Great*. It was the confederated work of four authors, famous in their time. Lambert le Court, and Alexander of Paris, sung the exploits of Alexander ; Peter de Saint Clost, wrote his will in verse ; the writing the will of a hero being then a common topic ; and John le Nivelois, added a book concerning the manner in which his death was revenged. It is remarkable, that before this time, all the *Romans* had been composed in verses of eight syllables : but in this piece, the four
 authors

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 283

authors first used verses of TWELVE syllables, as more solemn and majestic. And this was the origin, though but little known, of those verses, which we now call ALEXANDRINES; the French heroic measure: the name being derived from Alexander, the hero of the piece, or from Alexander, the most celebrated of the four poets concerned in this work. These were the most applauded poets of that age. Fauchet highly commends this poem; particularly a passage where a Cavalier is struck to the ground with a lance, who, says the old bard,

Du long comme il etoit, mesura la campagne.

Which is not inferior to Virgil's,

Hesperiam metire jacens.—

One would not imagine this line had been written, so early as the middle of the twelfth century. A great and truly learned antiquary has remarked, for the honour of our country, that about this time, 1160, appeared the first traces of any theatre. "A monk

N n 2

called

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called Geoffry, who was afterwards abbot of St. Albans in England, employed in the education of youth, made his pupils represent, with proper scenes and dresses, tragedies of piety. The subject of the first dramatic piece, was, the miracles of saint Catharine, which appeared long before any of our representations of the MYSTERIES *."

* The president Henault, *Histoire de France*. Tom. I. p. 151. a Paris 1749.

S E C T.

S E C T. VI.

*Of the Epistle of SAPPHO to PHAON,
and of ELOISA to ABELARD.*

IT is no small merit in Ovid, to have invented * this beautiful species of writing epistles under feigned characters. It is a high improvement on the Greek elegy ; to which its dramatic nature renders it greatly superior. It is indeed no other than a passionate soliloquy ; in which, the mind gives vent to the distresses and emotions under which it labours : but by being directed and addressed to a particular person, it gains a degree of propriety, that the best-conducted soliloquy, in a tragedy, must ever want. Our impatience under any pressures of grief, and disorder of mind, makes such passionate expostulations with the persons supposed to cause such uneasinesses, very natural. Judgment is chiefly

* Propertius, however, has one composition of this sort, entitled, *Epistola Arethuse ad Lycotam*. Lib. IV. Eleg. 3.

shewn,

shewn, by opening the interesting complaint just at such a period of time, as will give occasion for the most tender sentiments, and the most sudden and violent turns of passion to be displayed. Ovid may, perhaps, be blamed for a sameness of subjects, in these epistles of his heroines; whose distresses are almost all occasioned by their lovers forsaking them. His epistles are likewise too long; which circumstance has forced him into a repetition and languor in the sentiments. It would be a pleasing task, and conduce to the formation of a good taste, to shew how differently Ovid and the Greek tragedians, have made Medea, Phædra, and Deianira speak, on the very same occasions. Such a comparison would abundantly manifest, the FANCY and WIT of Ovid, and the JUDGMENT and NATURE of Euripides and Sophocles. If the character of Medea was not better supported in the tragedy, which Ovid is said to have produced, and of which Quintilian speaks so advantageously, than it is in her epistle to Jason, one may venture to declare, that the Romas would not yet have

have been vindicated, from their inferiority to the Greeks, in tragic poesy.

THE EPISTLE before us is translated by POPE, with faithfulness and with elegance; and much excells any that Dryden translated in the volume he published: many of which were done by some "of the mob of gentlemen that wrote with ease;" that is, Sir C. Scroop, Caryl, Pooley, Wright, Tate, Buckingham, Cooper, and other careless rhymers. A good translation of these epistles, is as much wanted, as one of Juvenal; for, out of sixteen satires of that poet, Dryden himself translated but six. We can now boast of happy translations in verse, of almost all the great poets of antiquity; whilst the French have been poorly contented with only prose translations of Homer and Horace, which, says Cervantes, can no more resemble the original, than the wrong side of tapestry can represent the right. The inability of the French tongue to express many Greek or Roman ideas with facility and grace, is here visible: but the Italians have Horace translated by Pallavacini,

The-

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Theocritus by Ricolotti and Salvini, Ovid by Anguillara, the *Æneid*, admirably well, in blank verse, by Annibal Caro, and the *Georgics* in blank verse also, by Daniello.

I return to Ovid, by observing, that he has put into the mouth of his heroine a greater number of pretty panegyrical epigrams, than of those tender and passionate sentiments, which suited her character, and made her *SENSIBILITY* in amours so famous. What can be more elegantly gallant than this compliment to Phaon?

*Sume fidem & pharetram ; fies manifestus Apollo ;
Accedant capiti cornua ; Bacchus eris.*

This thought seems indisputably to have been imitated, in that most justly celebrated of modern epigrams :

*Lumine Acon dextro, capta est Leonilla sinistro,
Et potis est forma vincere uterque Deos ;
Blande puer, lumen quod habes, concede forori,
Sic tu cæcus AMOR, sic erit illa VENUS.*

My

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 289

My chief reason for quoting these delicate lines, was to point out the occasion of them, which seems not to be sufficiently known. They were made on Louis de Maguiron, the most beautiful man of his time, and the great favourite of Henry III. of France, who lost an eye at the siege of Iffoire, and on the Princess of Eboli, a great beauty, but who was deprived of the sight of one of her eyes, and who was at the same time mistress of Philip II. King of Spain.

It was happily imagined to write an epistle in the character of Sappho, who had spoken of the joys of love with more warmth and feeling, than any writer of antiquity; and who described the violent symptoms attending this passion, in so strong and lively a manner, that the physician Erasistratus is said to have discovered the secret malady of the Prince Antiochus, who was in love with his mother-in-law Stratonice, merely by examining the symptoms of his patient's distemper by this description. Addison has inserted in two of

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his Spectators *, an elegant character of this poetess ; and has given a translation of two of her fragments, that are exquisite in their kind : a translation, which we may presume Addison himself revised, and altered, for his friend Philips. As these two pieces are pretty well-known, by being found in so popular a book as the Spectator, I shall say no more of them ; but shall add two more of her fragments, which, though very short, are yet highly beautiful and tender. The first represents the languor and listlessness of a person deeply in love ; we may suppose the fair author looking up earnestly on her mother, casting down the web on which she was employed, and suddenly exclaiming ;

Γλυκία μήτηρ, ου τοι
Δυναμαι κρησιν τον ισον,
Ποθεν δαμνισα παιδος,
Βραδυναν δι' Αφροδιτας †.

Dulcis mater ! non
Possum texere telum

† Inter novem illustr. formin. fragmenta. Edit. a Fulvio Ur-
sino, Antwerp.

* N°. 223—229.

Amore victa pueri,
Per acrem Venerem.

The other fragment is of the descriptive kind; and seems to be the beginning of an Ode addressed to EVENING: it is quoted by Demetrius Phalereus *,

Ἰσπερ πάντα φερεις,
Φερεις οἶνον, φερεις αἶμα,
Φερεις μάστιγι παιδά.

Vesper omnia fers;
Fers vinum, fers capram,
Fers matri filiam.

From these little fragments, the first of which is an example of the *pathetic*, and the second of the *picturesque*, the *manner* of Sappho might have been gathered, if the two longer odes had not been preserved in the treatises of Dionysius, and of Longinus. I cannot help adopting the application Addison has made of his two lines of Phædrus, to these remains of our poetess; which is perhaps one of the most elegant, and happy applications that ever was made from any classic;

* Edit. Oxon. p. 104.

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O suavis anima ! qualem te dicam bonam
Antehac fuisse, tales cum sint reliquæ * !

THE versification of this translation of POPE, is, in point of melody, next to that of his pastorals. Perhaps the two following lines, in which alliteration is successfully used, are the most harmonious verses in our language, I mean in rhyme :

Ye gentle gales ! beneath my body blow,
And softly lay me on the waves below !

The peculiar musicalness of the first of these lines, in particular, arises principally from it's consisting entirely of iambic feet ; which have always a striking, although unperceived, effect in an English verse. As for example ;

Ye gēntlē gāles bēneāth mŷ bōdŷ blōw.

Even if the last foot alone be an iambic, it casts a harmony over a whole line † :

Rapt into future times the bard bēgūn.

* Phædr. Fab. L. iii. Fab. i. ver. 5, 6.

† See WARTON on Spenser, Sect. xi. pag. 259, &c.

There

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There are many niceties in our versification, which few attend to, and which would demand a regular treatise fully to discuss: we should surely use every possible art, to render our rough Northern language harmonious.

FENTON also has given us a translation of this epistle to Phaon; but it is in no respect equal to POPE's: he has added another, of his own invention, of Phaon to Sappho, in which the story of the transformation of the former, from an old mariner to a beautiful youth, is well told. Fenton * was an elegant scholar, and had an exquisite taste; the books he

* POPE highly valued him. In a letter to Gay, Vol. VIII. p. 169. he says, "I have just received the news of the death of a friend, whom I esteemed almost as many years as you; poor Fenton. He died at East-hamstead, of indolence and inactivity; let it not be your fate, but use exercise." Craggs, who had never received a learned education, had some time before commissioned POPE to find out for him some polite scholar, whom he proposed to take into his family, that he might acquire a taste of literature, by the conversation and instruction of the person POPE should recommend. He accordingly chose Fenton; but Craggs died unluckily for the execution of this scheme. Mr. Craggs had the candor to make no objection to Fenton, tho' he was a nonjuror; being, I presume, convinced he was honest as well as learned.

translated

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translated for POPE in the *Odyssey*, are superior to Brome's. In his *Miscellanies* are many pieces worthy notice ; particularly, his *Epistle to Southerne* ; the *Fair Nun*, imitated from Fontaine ; *Olivia a Character*, an *Ode to the Sun*, and one to Lord Gower, written in the true spirit of Lyric poetry, of which the following allegory is an example :

Enamour'd of the *SEINE*, celestial fair,
 The blooming pride of *Thetis azure train*,
Bacchus, to win the nymph who caus'd his care,
 Lash'd his swift tigers to the Celtic plain ;
 There secret in her saphire cell,
 He with the *Nais* wont to dwell,
 Leaving the nectar'd feasts of *Jove* ;
 And where her mazy waters flow,
 He gave the mantling vine to grow,
 A trophy to his love.

His tragedy of *Mariamne* has undoubtedly merit, tho' the diction be too figurative and ornamental ; it does indeed superabound in the richest poetic images : except this may be palliated by urging, that it suits the characters of oriental heroes, to talk in so high a strain, and to use such a luxuriance of metaphors.

FROM

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 295

FROM this EPISTLE of Sappho, I may take occasion to observe, that this species of writing, beautiful as it is, has not been much cultivated among us. Drayton, no despicable genius, attempted to revive it, and has left us some good subjects, tho' not very artfully handled *. We have also a few of this sort of epistles by the late Lord Hervey, in the fourth volume of Dodsley's Miscellanies †, Flora to Pompey ‡, Arisbe to Marius, and Monimia to Philocles, in which last are some pathetic strokes, and Roxana to Usbeck, taken from the incomparable § letters of the late president Montesquieu; a fine || original work,

in

* The best of his ENGLAND'S HEROICAL EPISTLES, are King John to Matilda, Elinor Cobham to Duke Humphry, William De Le Poole to Queen Margaret; Jane Shore to Edward IV. Lord Surrey to Geraldine, and Lady Jane Grey to Lord Guilford Dudley. In his BARON'S WARS, there are many strokes not unworthy of Spenser; and his Nymphidia must be allowed to be a perfect pattern of pastoral elegance.

† Page 90. & seq.

‡ Taken from Fontenelle.

§ Lettres Persans. A Geneve. 1716.

|| Lady Wortley Montague, who resided so long at Constantinople, said, "One would have thought the Baron de Montesquieu had been born and bred a Turk, he has described that people, and the women particularly, so very accurately."

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in which the customs and manners of the Persians are painted with the utmost truth and liveliness, and which have been faintly imitated by the Jewish, Chinese, and other Letters. The beauty of this writer, is his expressive brevity ; which Lord Hervey has lengthened to a degree that is unnatural ; especially, as Roxana is supposed to write just after she has swallowed a deadly poison, and during it's violent operations. I have lately seen several pieces of this species, which, as the subjects are striking, will, I hope, one day see the light. They are entitled, "TASSO to LEONORA ; written in an interval of his madness : LUCAN to NERO ; just after he was condemned to death : Lady OLIVIA to CLEMENTINA, on her refusing to marry Grandison : CHARLES V. from the monastery he retired to, to the King of France : GALGACUS, general of the Britons, to AGRICOLA

rately."—" I had rather have written the short history of the Troglodites, consisting only of ten pages, than the admirable, the immortal history of Thuanus in ten great volumes."
MISSE PENSEES. ccxiv.

that

that commanded the Romans: MONTEZUMA to CORTEZ: VITIKINDA, the general of the Saxons, to CHARLEMAYNE: and ROSMUNDA to ALBOINUS, King of the Lombards."

THE Italians had a writer of heroic epistles called Antonio Bruni; these are some of his subjects; the HEBREW MOTHER to TITUS VESPASIAN, ERMINIA to TANCRED, CATHERINE of ARRAGON to HENRY VIII. TURNUS to LAVINIA, TANCRED to CLORINDA, ARMIDA to RINALDO, RADAMISTUS to ZENOBIA, NAUSICAA to ULYSSES, ANGELICA to ORLANDO, SOPHONISBA to MASINISSA, SEMIRAMIS to NINUS, HONORIO to ATTILA.

BUT of all stories, ancient or modern, there is not perhaps a more proper one to furnish out an elegiac epistle, than that of ELOISA and ABELARD. Their distresses were of a most SINGULAR and PECULIAR kind; and their names sufficiently known, but not grown trite or common by too frequent

P p

usage.

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usage. POPE was a most excellent IMPROVER, if no great original INVENTOR; for, as we have seen what an elegant superstructure he has raised on the little dialogue of the Comte de Gabalis, so shall we perceive, in the sequel of this Section, how finely he has worked up the hints of distress, that are scattered up and down in Abelard's and Eloisa's Letters; and, in a little French * history of their lives and misfortunes. † Abelard was reputed the most handsome, as well as most learned man, of his time; according to the kind of learning then in vogue. An old chronicle, quoted by ‡ Andrew du Chesne informs us, that scho-

* Printed at the Hague, 1693.

† He was born at Palais near Nantes in Brittany, at the beginning of the twelfth century, and studied at Paris under William Champeaux.

‡ In Hist. Cal. Abel. p. 1155. And the high opinion that was held of his learning, may appear from his epitaph by Pet. de Clugny.

Gallorum Socrates, Plato maximus Hesperiarum,
Noster Aristoteles, Logicis, quicunque fuerunt,
Aut par, aut melior, studiorum cognitus orbi
Princeps, ingenio varius, subtilis & acer;
Omnia vi superans rationis & arte loquendi,
Abelardus erat, &c.——

Vid. Abel. & Heloif. Epist. pag. 235. Edit. Rawlinson, 1718.

lars

lars flocked to his lectures from all quarters of the latin world. And his cotemporary St. Bernard relates, that he numbered among his disciples many principal ecclesiastics, and cardinals, at the court of Rome. Abelard himself boasts, that when he retired into the country, he was followed by such immense crowds of scholars, that they could get neither lodgings nor provisions sufficient for them; “*ut nec locus hospitii, nec terra sufficeret alimentis* *.” He met with the fate of many learned men, to be embroiled in controversy, and accused of heresy; for St. † Bernard, whose influence and authority was very great, got his opinion of the Trinity condemned, at a council held at Sens, 1140. But the ta-

* Abelardi Opera, p. 19.

† The character of this St. Bernard was singular; the president Henault thus speaks of him. “*Il avoit etè donné à cet homme extraordinaire de dominer les esprits,*” one beholds him pass in a moment from the depth of a desert to a court, where he never was displaced; where he lived without titles, without a public character, enjoying that personal weight which is above authority.—Yet no less a man of sanctity, and a man of wit, than a great politician: His sermons are masterpieces of sentiment and energy. *Histoire de France: Troisième Race.* p. 145.

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lents of * Abelard were not confined to theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, and the thorny paths of scholasticism : he gave proofs of a lively genius, by many poetical performances ; infomuch, that he was reputed to be the author of the famous Romance of the Rose ; which, however, was indisputably written by JOHN OF MEUN, a little city on the banks of the Loire, about four leagues from Orleans ; which gave occasion to Marot to exclaim ;

De Jean de Meun s'enfle le cours de Loire.

Of this ancient French poet much more will be said, in the course of this work, when we come occasionally to speak of Chaucer : suffice it at present to observe, that he certainly continued and finished the Romance of the

* One is sometimes surprized to see the honours and veneration formerly paid to men of literature, in comparison of what they meet with at present. “ As every human advantage is attended with inconveniences, the change of men’s ideas in this particular, may probably be ascribed to the invention of PRINTING ; which has rendered books so common, that even men of slender fortunes can have access to them.” HUME’s History of Great-Britain, p. 149.

Rose,

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Rose, which * William de Lorris had left imperfect, forty years before. If chronology † did not absolutely contradict the notion of Abelard's being the author of this very celebrated piece, yet are there internal arguments sufficient to confute it. The mistake seems to have flowed, from his having given Eloisa the name of Rose, in one of the many sonnets he addressed to her. In this romance, there are many severe and satirical strokes on the character of Eloisa, which the pen of ‡ Abelard never would have given. In one passage, she is introduced speaking with indecency and obscenity; in another, all the vices and bad qualities of women are represented, as assembled together in her alone.

Qui

• Whom Marot praises as the Ennius of France,
Notre Ennius Guillaume de Lorris.

He took his name from the town of Lorris where he was born.

† There is undoubted evidence, that it was written an hundred years after Abelard flourished.

‡ Eloisa speaks thus of Abelard's poetry and skill also in music; for he sung his own verses. "Duo autem fateor, tibi specialiter inerant, quibus foeminarum quarumlibet animos statim allicere poterat; dictandi videlicet & cantandi gratia.

Quæ

Qui les mœurs feminins favoit,
Car tres-tous en foi les avoit.

In a very old epistle dedicatory, addressed to Philip the fourth of France, by this same John of Meun, and prefixed to a French translation of Boetius, a very popular book at that time, it appears, that he also translated the epistles of Abelard to Heloisa, which were in high vogue at the court. He mentions also that he had translated Vegetius, on the Art military, and a book called the Wonders of Ireland; these works shew us the taste of the age: his words are; “ t’ envoye ores * Boece de consolation, que j’ ai translaté

Quæ cæteros minimè philosophos assecutos esse novimus. Quibus quidem quasi ludo quodam laborem exercitii recreans philosophici, pleraque amatorio metro vel ritmo composita reliquisti carmina, quæ præ nimîa suavitate tam dictaminis, quam cantus, sæpius frequentata, tuum in ore omnium nomen incessanter tenebant; ut etiam illiteratos melodiæ dulcedo tui non sineret immemores esse.” Epist. i. Heloissæ. p. 51.

It is observable, that Pope judiciously softened and harmonized her name to *Eloisa* from *Heloissa*.

* Chaucer also translated this piece.—Boetius was a most admired classic of that age; indeed he deserves to be so of any.

en

AND WRITINGS OF POPE: 303
en Francois, jacoit que bien entendes le
Latin *."

It is to be regretted, that we have no exact picture of the person and beauty of Eloisa; Abelard himself says, that she was, "facie non infima;" her extraordinary learning many circumstances concur to confirm; particularly one, which is, that the nuns of the Paraclete are wont to have the office of Whitsunday read to them in Greek, to perpetuate the memory of her understanding that language. The curious may not be displeased to be informed, that the Paraclete was built in the parish of Quincey, upon the little river Arduzon, near Nogent, upon the Seine. Happening to be in France a few years ago, I had the curiosity to visit the very spot; which I surveyed with much veneration. A lady, learned as was Eloisa in that age, who indisputably understood the latin, greek, and hebrew tongues, was a kind of prodigy: her literature

* This sentence strongly also characterises the times.

says

says * Abelard, “ in toto regno nominatiffimam fecerat :” and, we may be sure, more thoroughly attached him to her. Bussy Rabutin speaks in high terms of commendation, of the purity of Eloisa’s latinity : a judgment worthy a French count ! There is a force, but not an elegance in her style ; which is blemished, as might be expected, by many phrases unknown to the pure ages of the Roman language, and by many Hebraisms, borrowed from the translation of the bible.

I now propose to pass through the
 † EPISTLE, in order to give the reader
 a view of the various turns and tumults of
 passion, and the different sentiments with
 which

* Abel. Opera, p. 10.

† The compliment which Prior paid our author on this EPISTLE, is at once full of elegance and very lively imagery. He addresses it to Abelard, and says, that POPE has ~~words~~—

A filken web, and ne’er shall fade
 Its colours ; gently has he laid
 The mantle o’er thy sad distress,
 And Venus shall the texture bless.
 He o’er the weeping Nun has drawn,
 Such artful folds of sacred lawn ;

That

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 305

which Eloisa is agitated: and at the same time, to point out what passages are borrowed, and how much improved, from the original Letters. From this analysis, her struggles and conflicts, between duty and pleasure, between penitence and passion, will more amply and strikingly appear.

SHE begins with declaring, how the peacefulness of her situation has been disturbed, by a letter of her lover accidentally falling into her hands. This exordium is beautiful, being worked up with an awakening solemnity; she looks about her, and breaks out at once.

* In these deep solitudes and awful cells †,
Where heavenly-pensive CONTEMPLATION dwells,
And

That LOVE with equal grief and pride,
Shall see the crime he strives to hide,
And softly drawing back the veil,
The god shall to his vot'ries tell,
Each conscious tear, each blushing grace,
That deck'd dear Eloisa's face.

ALMA. p. 101.

* V. 1.

† “ If I was ordered to find out the most happy, and the most miserable man in the World, I would look for them in a cloister;” said a man of penetration.

Q 9

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And ever-mufing MELANCHOLY reigns ;
 What means this tumult in a veftal's veins ?
 Why rove my thoughts beyond this laft retreat ?
 Why feels my heart it's long-forgotten heat ?

She then refolves neither to mention nor to
 write the name of Abelard ; but fuddenly
 adds, in a dramatic manner,

* —————The name appears
 Already written—wafh it out my tears !

She then addreffes herfelf to the convent,
 where ſhe was confined, in fine imagery :

† Relentleſs walls ! whoſe darkſom round contains
 Repentant fighs, and voluntary pains,
 ‡ Ye rugged rocks ! which holy knees have worn,
 Ye grots and caverns ſhagg'd with horrid thorn !
 Shrines where their vigils pale-ey'd virgins keep,
 And pitying faints whoſe ſtatues learn to weep !

* V. 13.

† V. 18.

‡ This, and ſeveral other circumſtances, in the ſcenery view
 of the monaſtery, which denote antiquity, may perhaps be a
 little blamed, on account of their impropriety, when intro-
 duced into a place ſo lately founded as was the Paraclete :
 but are ſo well imagined, and highly painted, that they
 demand excuſe.

The'

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 307

Tho' cold like you, unmov'd and silent grown,
I have not yet forgot myself to stone * !

She proceeds to enumerate the effects, which Abelard's relation of their misfortunes has had upon her ; yet notwithstanding what she suffers from them, she intreats him still to write.

† Yet write, O write me all ! that I may join
Griefs to thy griefs, and echo sighs to thine.

This is from the Letters—" Per ipsum itaque —Christum obsecramus ; quatenus ancillulas ipsius & tuas, crebris literis de his, in quibus adhuc fluctuas, naufragiis certificare digneris, ut nos saltem quæ tibi solæ remansimus, doloris vel gaudii participes habeas †. On the mention of letters, she breaks out into that beautiful account of their use, which is finely improved from the latin.

* " Forget thyself to marble" is an expression of Milton, as is also, " Caverns shagg'd with horrid thorn ;" and the epithets " pale-eyed, and twilight," are *first* used in the smaller poems of Milton, which Pope had just perhaps been reading.

† V. 41.

‡ Epist. i. Heloiss. pag. 46.

Q q 2

Heaven

* Heaven first taught letters for some wretch's aid,
 Some banish'd lover, or some captive maid ;
 They live, they speak, they breathe, what love
 inspires,
 Warm from the soul, and faithful to it's fires † ;
 The virgin's wish without her fear impart,
 Excuse the blush and pour out all the heart.

“ De quibuscunque autem nobis scribas, non parvum nobis remedium conferes ; hoc saltem uno, quod te nostri memorem esse monstrabis.” She then quotes ‡ an unnecessary

* V. 51.

† It is to be hoped, that some of the fair sex, of the abilities of Eloisa, for we have two or three such at present in Great Britain, will answer the ingenious, but paradoxical philosopher of Geneva, who has vented many blasphemies against the passion of love. “ Il faut distinguer, says he, le MORAL du *physique* dans le sentiment de l'amour. Le *physique* est ce desir general qui porte une sexe a s'unir a l'autre ; Le *moral* est ce qui determine ce desir, & le fixe sur un seul objet exclusivement ; ou qui du moins lui donne pour cet objet preferé un plus grand degre d'energie. Or il est facile de voir que le moral de l'amour est un sentiment factice ; né de l'usage de la societe, & celebre par les femmes avec beaucoup d'habilité & de soin, pour etabliir leur empire, & rendre dominant le sexe qui devoit obeir.” DISCOURS sur L'origine de l'INEGALITE parmi les hommes—Par J. J. Rousseau. Amsterdam, 1755. p. 78.

It is not to be wondered at that he who has written a satire against human society, should satirize its greatest blessing.

‡ Epist. p. 47.

passage

passage of Seneca, and adds, “ Si imagines nobis amicorum absentium jucundæ sunt, quæ memoriam renovant, & desiderium absentiæ falso atque inani solatio levant; quanto jucundiores sunt literæ, quæ amici absentis veras notas efferunt * ?” The origin of Eloisa’s passion is, with much art and knowledge of human nature, ascribed to her admiration of her handsome preceptor : this circumstance is particularly poetical, and even sublime ;

† My fancy form’d thee of angelic kind,
Some emanation of th’ all-beauteous mind.

‡ How oft, when press’d to marriage, have I said,
Curse on all laws but those which love has made !
Let wealth, let honour wait the wedded dame,
August her deed and sacred be her fame ;
Before true passion all these views remove,
Fame wealth and honour, what are you to love ?

These sentiments are plainly from the letters,
“ Nihil unquam, deus scit, in te, nisi te requi-
sivi ; te purè non tua concupiscens. Non ma-
trimonii fœdera, non dotes aliquas expectavi.

* Ibid.

† V. 61.

‡ V. 73.

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Et si uxoris nomen sanctius ac validius videtur,
dulcius mihi semper extitit amicæ vocabulum,
aut, si non indigneris, concubinæ vel scorti *.
—POPE has added a very injudicious thought,

† The jealous God, when we profane his fires,
Those restless passions in revenge inspires,

And again,

‡ Love free as air, at sight of human ties,
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.

It is improper for a person in the situation of
Eloisa to mention Cupid ; mythology is here
out of its place. The Letters also furnished
the next thought :

§ Not Cæsar's empress would I deign to prove,
No, make me mistress of the man I love.

“ DEUM testem invoco, si me Augustus,
universo presidens mundo, matrimonii honore
dignaretur, totumque mihi orbem confirmaret
in perpetuo præsidendum, charius mihi &

* Epist. i. Heloiss. pag. 49.

† V. 81.

‡ V. 75.

§ V. 87.

dignius

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 311

dignius videretur, tua dici meretrix, quam illius imperatrix *." Next she describes their unparallelled happiness in the full and free enjoyment of their loves; but all at once stops short, and exclaims with eagerness, as if she at that instant saw the dreadful scene alluded to,

† Alas how chang'd! what sudden horrors rise!
A naked lover, bound and bleeding lies!
Where, where was Eloise? her voice, her hand,
Her ponyard had oppos'd the dire command!
Barbarian, stay! *that* bloody stroke restrain,
The crime was common, common be the pain †.

One

* Epist. i. Heloiss. pag. 50.

† V. 100.

‡ It was difficult to speak of this catastrophe that befel Abelard with any dignity and grace: our poet however has done it. I know not where castration is the chief cause of distress, in any other poem, except in a very extraordinary one of Catullus, where Atys, struck with madness by Berecynthia, in a fit of enthusiasm, inflicts this punishment on himself. After which he laments his condition in very pathetic strains. The poem has been so little remarked on, that I shall take the liberty of inserting the following passage in the speech of Atys, which is very dramatic, full of spirit, and sudden changes of passion.

Egone a meâ remota hæc ferar in nemora domo?
Patriâ, bonis, amicis, genitoribus abero?
Abero fero, palestrâ, stadio, gymnasiis?
Miser, ah miser, querendum est etiam atque etiam, anime,
Quod

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One knows not which most to applaud, the lively imagery, the pathetic, or the artful decency, with which this transaction is delicately hinted at, in these most excellent lines : which are the genuine voice of nature and passion,

*Quod enim genus ? figura est ? ego numquid abierim ?
Ego mulier ?—ego adolescens, ego ephebus, ego puer,
Ego gymnasii fui flos, ego eram decus olei,
Mihi januæ frequentes, mihi limina tepida ;
Mihi floridis corollis redimita domus erat,
Linquendum ubi esset orto mihi sole cubiculum.
Egone deum ministra, & Cybeles famula ferar ?
Egone mœnas, ego mei pars, ego vir sterilis ero ?
Ego viridis algida Idæ nive amicta loca colam ?
Ego vitam agam sub altis Phrygiæ columinibus ?
Ubi cerva sylvicultrix, ubi aper nemorivagus ?
Jam jam dolet quod egi, jam, jam quoque pœnitet !*

This whole poem being of a strain superiour to any thing in the Roman poesy, and more passionate and sublime than any part of Virgil, and being also so much above the tender and elegant genius of Catullus, whose name it bears, inclines me to think it a translation from some Grecian writer ; and perhaps, if the reader will peruse the whole, it will give him the truest notion of an old dithyrambic, of any poem antiquity has left us. The text is in some places much corrupted, but enough remains pure and intelligible to place it at the head of latin poetry, how strangely soever it has been neglected. It ought to be observed, that the seventh, eighth, and ninth lines of this quotation, bear a wonderful resemblance to a fine passage in the book of Job, ch. xxix. ver. 6. & seq. I shall only add, that this is the only complete poem of the kind.

and

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 313

and place the object intended to be impressed on the reader full in his sight.

SHE next reminds Abelard of the solemnity of her taking the veil, from verse one hundred and six, to one hundred and eighteen, which are highly beautiful, particularly these circumstances attending the rite——

As with *cold* lips I kiss'd the sacred veil,
The shrines all *trembled*, and the lamps *grew pale*!

These two circumstances are fancied with equal force and propriety; and this supposed prognostic of the uneasiness she would undergo in the monastic life, is very affecting. But her passion intruded itself even in the midst of this awful act* of devotion; the strength of which she represents by this particular,

* Yet then, to those dread altars as I drew,
Not on the *Cross* my eyes were fix'd, but *You*.

Here she gives her fondness leave to expatiate into many luscious ideas;

V. 115.

R r

Still

- * Still on that breast enamour'd let me lie,
Still drink delicious poison from thy eye,
Pant on thy lip, and to thy heart be prest;

And then follows a line exquisitely passionate,
and worthy the *sensibility* of Sappho or of
Eloisa,

Give all thou *canst*!—and let me dream the *rest*.

Suddenly she here checks the torrent of this
amorous transport—

- † Ah no—instruct me other joys to prize,
With other beauties charm my partial eyes.
Full in my view set all the bright abode,
And make my soul quit Abelard for God.

She puts him in mind of his being the father
and founder of the monastery, and entreats
him to visit his flock on that account. This
topic is taken from the Letters.

- ‡ From the false world in early youth they fled,
By thee to mountains, wilds, and deserts led;
You rais'd these hallow'd walls; the desert smil'd,
And paradise was open'd in the wild.

* V. 123.

† V. 125.

‡ V. 129.

“ Nihil

“Nihil hic super alienum ædificâsti fundamen-
tum ; totum quod hic est, tua creatio est.
Solitudo hæc feris tantum, five latronibus va-
cans, nullam hominum habitationem nove-
rat, nullam domum habuerat. In ipsis cubi-
libus ferarum, in ipsis latibulis latronum, ubi
nec nominari deus solet, divinum erexisti
tabernaculum, et spiritûs sancti proprium de-
dicâsti templum. Nihil ad hoc ædificandum
ex regum vel principum opibus intulisti, cum
plurima posses & maxima, ut quicquid fieret,
tibi soli posset ascribi *.” Which last sentence
is finely improved by POPE ; being at once
heightened with pathos and poetic imagery ;
and containing an oblique satire on benefac-
tions raised by avarice, or extorted by fear.

† No weeping orphan saw his father's stores
Our shrines irradiate or emblaze our floors ;
No silver saints by dying misers giv'n,
Here brib'd the rage of ill-requited heav'n ;
But such plain roofs as piety could raise.

No part of this poem, or indeed of any of
POPE's productions is so truly poetical, and

* Epist. i. Heloiss. p. 46.

† V. 135.

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contains such strong painting, as the passage to which we are now arrived ;—The description of the convent, where POPE's religion certainly aided his fancy. It is impossible to read it without being struck with a pensive pleasure, and a sacred awe, at the solemnity of the scene ; so picturesque are the epithets.

* In these *lone* walls, (their days *eternal* bound)
 These *moss-grown* domes with *spiry* turrets crown'd,
 Where *awful* arches make the noonday night,
 And the *dim* windows shed a *solemn* light ;
 Thy eyes diffus'd a reconciling ray.

All the circumstances that can amuse and soothe the mind of a solitary, are next enumerated in this expressive manner : and the reader that shall be disgusted at the length of the quotation, one might pronounce, has no taste, either for painting or poetry :

† The darksome pines that o'er yon rocks reclin'd
 Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind,
 The wand'ring streams that shine between the hills,
 The grotts that echo to the tinkling rills,

* V. 141.

† V. 154.

The

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 317

The dying gales that pant upon the trees,
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze;
No more these scenes my meditation aid,
Or lull to rest the visionary maid.

The effect and influence of MELANCHOLY, who is beautifully personified, on every object that occurs, and on every part of the convent, cannot be too much applauded, or too often read, as it is founded on nature and experience. That temper of mind casts a gloom on all things.

* But o'er the twilight groves and dusky caves,
Long-sounding iles, and intermingled graves,
Black MELANCHOLY sits, and round her throws
A death-like silence, and a dread repose;
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,
Shades every flower, and darkens every green,
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.

The figurative expressions, *throws*, and *breathes*, and *browner* horror, are, I verily believe, some of the strongest and boldest in the English language. The IMAGE of the Goddess ME-

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LANCHOLY sitting over the convent, and as it were expanding her dreadful wings over its whole circuit, and diffusing her gloom all around it, is truly sublime, and strongly conceived.

ELOISA proceeds to give an account of the opposite sentiments, that divide and disturb her soul; these are hinted in the Letters also,

* Ah wretch! believ'd the spouse of God in vain,
 Confess'd within the slave of love and man!
 I ought to grieve, but cannot what I ought;
 I mourn the lover, not lament the fault.

This however is improved greatly on the original. “Castam me prædicant, qui non prehenderunt hypocritam †.”—“Quomodo etiam pænitentia peccatorum dicitur, quantacunque sit corporis afflictio, si mens adhuc ipsam peccandi retinet voluntatem, & pristinis æstuat desideriis ‡?” She then fondly calls on Abelard for assistance,

§ O come! O teach me nature to subdue,
 Renounce my love, my life, myself and—you!

* V. 190. † Epist. p. 68. ‡ Ibid. 66. § V. 206.
 Fill

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 319

Fill my fond heart with God alone, for he
Alone can rival, can succeed to thee !

Fired with this idea of religion, she takes occasion to dwell on the happiness of a BLAMELESS vestal, one who has no such sin on her conscience, as she has, to bemoan. The life of such an one is described at length by such *sorts* of pleasure, as none but a spotless nun can partake of ; the climax of her happiness is finely conducted ;

* For her the SPOUSE prepares the bridal ring,
For her white virgins hymeneals sing,
For her th' unfading rose of Eden blooms,
And wings of Seraphs shed divine perfumes,
To sounds of heavenly harps she dies away,
And melts in visions of eternal day !

What a judicious and poetical use hath POPE here made of the opinions of the mystics and quietists : how would Fenelon have been delighted with these lines ! True poetry, after all, cannot well subsist, at least is never so striking, without a tincture of enthusiasm. The sudden transition has a fine effect ;

* V. 215.

† V. 323.

For

† Far other dreams my erring soul employ,
Far other raptures of unholy joy.

Which raptures are painted with much sensibility, and in very animating colours. “*Nec etiam dormienti suis illusionibus parcut **.”

Again,

† Oh curst dear horrors of all-conscious night;
How glowing guilt exalts the keen delight!

This is very forcibly expressed. She proceeds to recount a dream; in which I was always heavily disappointed, because the imagined distress is such, as might attend the dreams of any person whatever ‡.

§ ———Methinks we wand’ring go
Thro’ dreary wastes, and weep each other’s woe,
Where round some mould’ring tow’r pale ivy creeps,
And low-brow’d rocks hang nodding o’er the deeps;
Sudden you mount, you beckon from the skies,
Clouds interpose, &c.

* V. 123.

† V. 129.

‡ It is partly from Dido’s dream.

§ V. 242.

These

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 321

These are, indisputably, picturesque lines; but what I want is a vision of some such appropriated, and peculiar distress, as could be incident to none but Eloisa; and which should be drawn from, and have reference to, her single story. What distinguishes Homer and Shakespear from all other poets, is, that they do not give their readers GENERAL ideas: every image is the particular and unalienable property of the person who uses it; it is suited to no other; it is made for him or her alone. Even Virgil himself is not free from this fault; but is frequently general and indiscriminating, where Homer is minutely circumstantial. She next compares his situation with her own:

* For thee the fates, severely kind, ordain
A cool suspense from pleasure and from pain;
Thy life a long dead calm of fix'd repose,
No pulse that riots, and no blood that glows †.

* V. 250.

† The four similes that follow, drawn from religion, are admirable.

S f

Here

Here Eloisa glances with great modesty and delicacy, at the irreparable misfortune of her mutilated lover, which she always mentions with regret. I question whether it may be improper to alleviate the dryness of these critical remarks, with the following story; which I wish had fallen into the hands of Fontaine.

“ THE Greeks waged war upon the duke of Benevento, and made him very uneasy. Thedbald, Marquis of Spoleto, his ally, marching to his assistance, and having taken some prisoners, ordered them to be castrated, and in that condition sent them back to the Greek general, with orders to tell him, that he had done it to oblige the emperor, whom he knew to be a lover of eunuchs; and that he would endeavour to send him, in a short time, a much greater number of them. The Marquis was preparing to be as good as his word, when one day a woman, whose husband had been taken prisoner, came all in tears

tears to the camp, and begged to speak to Thedbald. The Marquis having asked her the cause of her grief, my Lord, says she, I wonder that such a valiant hero as you should trifle away your time in warring with women, when men are unable to resist you. Thedbald replied, that, since the days of the Amazons, he had never heard that war had been made upon women. My Lord, answered the Greek woman, can a crueller be made upon us, than to deprive our husbands of what gives us health, pleasure, and children? When you make eunuchs of them, it is mutilating us, not them: you have lately taken away our cattle and goods, without any complaint from me: but this being an irreparable loss to several of my neighbours, I could not avoid imploring the compassion of the conqueror. The whole army was so pleased with this woman's ingenuous declaration, that they restored her husband to her, and all they had taken from her. As she was going away, Thedbald asked her, what she would be will-

ing should be done to her husband, if he was found in arms again. He has eyes, said she, a nose, hands, and feet: these are his own, which you may take from HIM if he deserves it; but leave him, if you please, what belongs to ME *."

A HINT in the Letters has been beautifully heightened, and elevated into exquisite poetry, in the next paragraph. Eloisa says only, "Inter ipsa missarum solemnia, ubi purior esse debeat oratio, obscœna earum voluptatum phantasmata ita sibi penitus miserrimam captivant animam, ut turpitudinibus illis, magis quam orationi, vacem.—Nec solum quæ egimus, sed loca pariter & tempora †," &c.—Let us see how this has been improved.

‡ What scenes appear, where'er I turn my view,
The dear ideas where I fly pursue,
Rise in the grove, before the altar rise—

Then follows a circumstance peculiarly tender

* Bibliothéque Universelle, Tom. XI. p. 10.

† Epist. II. Heloiss. pag. 67.

‡ V. 251.

and

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 325

and proper, as it refers to a particular excellence of Abelard,

* THY VOICE I seem in every hymn to hear,
With every bead I drop too soft a tear.

To which succeed that sublime description of a high mass, which came from the poet's soul, and is very striking.

† When from the censer clouds of fragrance roll,
And swelling organs lift the rising soul,
One thought of thee puts all the pomp to flight,
Priests, tapers, temples, swim before my sight,
In seas of flame my plunging soul is drown'd,
While altars blaze, and angels tremble round.

I BELIEVE few persons have ever been present at the celebrating a mass in a good choir, but have been extremely affected with awe, if not with devotion; which ought to put us on our guard, against the insinuating nature of so pompous and alluring a religion as popery. Lord Bolingbroke being one day present at this solemnity, in the chapel at Versailles, and seeing the archbishop of Paris elevate the

* Y. 269.

† V. 259.

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the host, whispered his companion the Marquis de * * * * *, " If I were king of France, I would always perform this ceremony myself."

ELOISA now acknowledges the weakness of her religious efforts, and gives herself up to the prevalence of her passion.

* Come, with one glance of those deluding eyes,
Blot out each bright idea of the skies ;
Take back that grace, that sorrow, and these tears,
Take back my fruitless penitence and pray'rs ;
Snatch me just mounting, from the blest abode,
Assist the fiends, and tear me from my God !

Suddenly, religion rushes back on her mind,
and she exclaims eagerly,

† No fly me, fly me ! far as pole to pole !—
Ah, *come* not, *write* not, *think* not once of me,
Nor share one pang of all I felt for thee.
Thy oaths I quit, thy memory resign,
Forget, renounce me, hate whate'er was mine.

* V. 280.

† V. 300.

This

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 327

This change is judicious and moving. And the following invocation to hope, faith, and christian grace, to come and take full possession of her soul, is solemn, and suited to the condition of her mind; for it seems to be the poet's intention to shew the force of religion over passion at last, and to represent her as a little calm and resigned to her destiny, and way of life. To fix her in which holy temper, the circumstance that follows may be supposed to contribute. For she relates an incident to Abelard, which had made a very deep impression on her mind, and cannot fail of making an equal one, on the mind of those readers, who can relish true poetry, and strong imagery. The scene she paints is awful: she represents herself lying on a tomb, and thinking she heard some * spirit calling to her in every low wind,—

† Here as I watch'd the dying lamps around,
From yonder shrine I heard a hollow sound,

* V. 308.

† Virgil may however have given the hint.—*Hinc exaudiri voces, & verba vocantis visa viri*—L. 4. 460.

Come

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Come sister come, (it said, or seem'd to say)
 Thy place is here, sad sister, come away!
 Once like thyself I trembled, wept and pray'd *,
 Love's victim then, but now a fainted maid.

This scene would make a fine subject for the pencil; and is worthy a capital painter. He might place Eloisa in the long ile of a great Gothic church; a lamp should hang over her head, whose dim and dismal ray should afford only light enough to make darkness visible. She herself should be represented in the *instant*, when she first hears this aerial voice, and in the attitude of *starting round* with astonishment and fear. And this was the method a very great master took, *to paint a sound*, if I may be allowed the expression. This subject was the baptism of Jesus Christ; and in order to bring into the piece the remarkable incident of the voice from heaven, which cried aloud, “ This is my beloved

* It is well contrived, that this invisible speaker, should be a person that had been under the very same kind of misfortunes with Eloisa.

son,”

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 329

son," he represented all the assembly that attended on the banks of Jordon, gazing up into heaven, with the utmost ardor of amazement.

AT this call of a sister in misfortune, who had been visited with a sad similitude of griefs with her own, Eloisa breaks out in a religious transport,

I come, I come! prepare your roseate bow'rs,
Cœlestial palms, and ever-blooming flow'rs;
Thither where *sinners* may have rest I go!

She then calls on Abelard, to pay her the last sad offices; and to be present with her in the article of death,

See my lips tremble, and my eyeballs roll—

And then a circumstance of personal fondness intervenes,

Suck my last breath, and catch the flying soul!

But she instantly corrects herself, and would have her Abelard attend her at these last

T t solemn

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solemn moments, only as a devout priest, and not as a fond lover. The image, in which she represents him coming to administer extreme unction, is striking and picturesque ;

Ah no—in sacred vestments mayst thou stand,
Thy hallow'd taper * *trembling* in thy hand,
Present the cross before my *lifted* eye,
Teach me at once, and learn of me, to die !

She adds, that it will be *some* consolation to behold him once more, tho' even in the agonies of death,

Ah then ! thy once-lov'd Eloisa see !
It will be *then* no crime to *gaze* on me !

Which last line I could never read without great emotion ; it is at once so pathetic, and so artfully points back to the whole train and nature of their misfortunes. The circumstances, she wishes may attend the death of Abelard, are poetically imagined, and are also agreeable to the notions of mystic devo-

* The words printed in Italics, ought to be looked on as particularly beautiful.

tion,

tion. The death of St. Jerome is finely painted by DOMENICHINO, with such attendant particulars;

- * In trance ecstasie may thy pangs be drown'd,
Bright clouds descend, and angels watch thee round,
From opening skies may streaming glories shine,
And saints embrace thee with a love like mine.
May one kind grave unite each hapless name,
And graft my love immortal on thy fame!

This wish was fulfilled. The body of Abelard, who died twenty years before Êloisa, was sent to Eloisa, who interred it in the monastery of the Paraclete, and it was accompanied with a very extraordinary form of Absolution, from the famous Peter de Clugny; “ Ego Petrus Cluniacensis abbas, qui Petrum Abelardum in monachum Cluniacensem recepi, & corpus ejus furtim delatum Heloissæ Abbatisæ, & monialibus Paracleti concessi, auctoritate omnipotentis Dei, & omnium sanctorum, absolvo eum, pro officio, ab omnibus

* V. 340.

T t 2

peccatis

peccatis suis *.”—“Eloisa herself, says † Vigneul Marville, solicited for this absolution, and Peter de Clugny willingly granted it; on what it could be founded, I leave to our learned theologists to determine. In certain ages, opinions have prevailed, for which no solid reason can be given.” When Eloisa died in 1163, she was interred by the side of her beloved husband: I must not forget to mention, for the sake of those who are fond of miracles, that when she was put into the grave, Abelard stretched out his arms to receive her, and closely embraced her.

ELOISA, at the conclusion of the EPISTLE to which we are now arrived, is judiciously represented as gradually settling into a tranquillity of mind, and seemingly reconciled to her fate. She can bear to speak of their being buried together, without violent emotions. Two lovers are introduced as visiting their

* Epist. Abæl. & Heloiss. pag. 238.

† Melanges, T. ii. p. 55.

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 333
celebrated tombs, and the behaviour of these
strangers is finely imagined ;

- * From the full quire when loud Hosannas rise,
And swell the pomp of *dreadful* sacrifice,
Amid that scene, if some relenting eye,
Glance on the stone where our cold relics lie,
Devotion's self shall steal a thought from heav'n,
One human tear shall drop—and be forgiv'n !

WITH this last line, at first it appears, that
the poem should have ended ; for the eight
additional verses †, concerning some poet, that
haply might arise to sing their misfortune, are
languid and flat, and diminish the pathos of
the foregoing sentiments. They might stand
it should seem for the conclusion of almost
any story, were we not informed, that they

* V. 353.

- † And sure if fate some future bard shall join
In sad similitude of grief to mine,
Condemn'd *whole years* in *absence* to deplore,
And *image* charms he must behold no more ;
Such if there be, who loves so long, so well ;
Let him our sad, our tender story tell !
The well-sung woes will sooth my pensive ghost ;
He best can paint 'em, who can feel 'em most.

were

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were added by the Poet in allusion to his own case, and the state of his own mind. For what determined him in the choice of the subject of this epistle, was the retreat of that lady into a nunnery, whose death he had lately so pathetically lamented, in a foregoing Elegy, and for whom he had conceived a violent passion. She was first beloved by a nobleman, an intimate friend of POPE, and, on his deserting her, retired into France; when, before she had made her last vows in the convent, to which she had retreated, she put an end to her unfortunate life. The recollection of this circumstance will add a beauty and a pathos to many passages in the poem, and will confirm the doctrine delivered above *, concerning the choice of subject.

· THIS EPISTLE, is, on the whole, one of the most highly finished, and certainly the most interesting, of the pieces of our author; and, together with the ELEGY to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady, is the only instance

* Pag. 253.

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 335

of the Pathetic POPE has given us. I think one may venture to remark, that the reputation of POPE, as a poet, among posterity, will be principally owing to his WINDSOR-FOREST, his RAPE OF THE LOCK, and his ELOISA TO ABELARD ; whilst the facts and characters alluded to and exposed, in his later writings, will be forgotten and unknown, and their poignancy and propriety little relished, For WIT and SATIRE are transitory and perishable, but NATURE and PASSION are eternal.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.









